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Coronavirus, Disasters, Housing, and Homelessness – Highlights

House Financial Services Committee Approves \$75 Billion in Coronavirus Aid

The House Financial Services Committee (HFSC) approved on February 11 its section of the coronavirus relief bill. The HFSC package, totaling \$75 billion, passed out of the committee by a vote of 29-24. It contains funding for housing and homelessness programs, including \$25 billion in emergency rental and other housing assistance and \$5 billion to assist people who are homeless with immediate and longer-term needs, as well as other vital provisions (see *Memo*, [2/8](#)).

The vote followed two days of committee debate and votes during which Republicans proposed 35 amendments to the bill, with only one adopted by the committee. Other House committees also completed votes on their sections of the relief package, including the House Ways and Means Committee, which included provisions for \$1,400 stimulus checks and an expansion of the Child Tax Credit program.

Having secured committee approval, the committees will now send their sections of the relief package to the House Budget Committee, where they will be combined into one \$1.9 trillion package. Congressional leaders hope to send a final bill to President Biden before March 14, when extended unemployment benefits are set to expire.

Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition Submits Comments on Proposed Rule Limiting Access to FEMA Resources

The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) – a group of over 850 local, state, and national groups working to ensure equitable housing recovery – submitted a [comment letter](#) this week on a [proposed rule](#) announced by FEMA that would severely restrict disaster-impacted states from receiving federal assistance in the future.

The FEMA Public Assistance (PA) program reimburses states, local governments, and some non-profits for disaster costs such as debris removal, emergency protective measures to protect life and property, and permanent repair work to damaged or destroyed infrastructure. To receive FEMA assistance, elected officials must make a formal request to the president for approval, a decision based largely on FEMA's recommendation.

Specifically, the rule would modify how FEMA calculates the estimated cost of assistance (COA), one of the six factors on which FEMA bases its recommendations. The rule would apply over ten years of inflation adjustments to the nationwide standards it uses to determine a COA and modify its calculations by each state's total taxable revenue (TTR). TTR measures how much revenue a state could potentially receive if it taxed all available sources. For multiple states, the level of disaster damage required to receive FEMA PA would increase by more than 100%, severely curtailing the amount of PA approvals states would receive. If the full rule is implemented, communities would lose access to federal resources they need to recover in all but very large disasters. During a time when state and local resources are being pushed to the limit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rule would severely restrict access to critical resources.

The DHRC's comments argue these changes would abruptly restrict access to FEMA assistance based on inaccurate data that fails to show a state's ability to respond, leaving them with little time to boost their capacity to address disasters without federal aid and placing disaster survivors and their communities at greater risk. Instead of implementing these changes, the DHRC urges FEMA to continue assisting states to build their capacity to respond to disasters and to work with other federal agencies to streamline the disaster recovery process – lessening agency workloads for each disaster.

NLIHC has created a [fact sheet](#) describing the rule and offering arguments in opposition. The deadline for comments on this proposed rule has been [extended](#) through March 12. Comments can be submitted through the [Federal eRulemaking Portal](#). FEMA will be hosting a virtual public meeting on February 24 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm EST to solicit feedback on the proposed rule. To RSVP for that meeting you can contact Tod Wells, deputy division director, Recovery Directorate, Public Assistance, by email at FEMA-PA-Policy-Questions@fema.dhs.gov or by phone at (202) 646-2500.

Read the text of the proposed rule at: <https://bit.ly/3r6AyL3>

Read the DHRC's comment letter at: <https://bit.ly/3tKpDb4>

Read NLIHC's fact sheet on the rule at: <https://bit.ly/2XMxndO>

Coronavirus, Disasters, Housing, and Homelessness – Other

Join NLIHC's National Call on Coronavirus, Disasters, Housing, and Homelessness Today at 2:30 pm ET

Join today's (February 16) national call on coronavirus, disasters, housing, and homelessness at 2:30-4 pm ET. Jennifer Loving from Destination: Home will share details about a rental assistance program in San Jose the organization helped shape to target extremely low-income renters. We will hear the latest on an eviction moratorium and emergency rental assistance and receive updates from the field and Capitol Hill.

Register for the national call at: <https://tinyurl.com/ru73qan>

See the full agenda [here](#).

Recording Available of NLIHC's February 8 National Call on "Coronavirus, Disasters, Housing, and Homelessness"

During the most recent national call on [coronavirus, disasters, housing, and homelessness](#), we were joined by Representative Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO), who discussed the next coronavirus relief package and his plans for other housing legislation moving forward. We also heard about a resource on healthcare and homelessness programs, learned about a borrower awareness campaign, and received field updates from Michigan and Massachusetts.

Representative Cleaver, chair of the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development, and Insurance, shared his plans for housing legislation during the 117th Congress. NLIHC's Sarah Saadian provided an update on the [budget reconciliation process](#) to pass the next coronavirus relief bill. The [House Financial Services Committee released their COVID-19 relief bill](#) on February 5 that includes \$40 billion for rental, housing, and homelessness assistance (see *Memo*, [2/8](#)).

Barbara DiPietro of the [National Health Care for the Homeless Council](#) provided an overview of a new [Framework](#) resource on [building healthcare partnerships](#) to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness. The [report](#) highlights three communities that successfully integrated health care and homelessness services in response to the pandemic. Faith Schwartz of [Housing Finance Strategies, LLC](#) discussed the [COVID-19 Borrower Awareness Campaign](#), which was created to help borrowers understand their options during the coronavirus-induced economic crisis. We also received field updates from the [Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness](#) and the [Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness](#).

NLIHC hosts national calls on coronavirus, disasters, housing, and homelessness every week. On today's call, we will hear about a rental assistance program in San Jose, California targeted to extremely low-income renters, share the latest on the coronavirus relief package, get updates from the field, and more. Register for today's call (Tuesday, February 16 at 2:30 pm ET) at: <https://tinyurl.com/ru73qan>

Watch a recording of the February 8 call at: tinyurl.com/2e2bopql

Access presentation slides at: tinyurl.com/4jyq3mv2

Additional Coronavirus Updates – February 16, 2021

Updated NLIHC Resources

- [Housing Provisions in the COVID-19 Relief Bill](#)
- [FAQ: Eligibility for Assistance Based on Immigration Status](#) & in [\[Español\]](#)
- [National Eviction Moratorium: FAQ for Renters](#) & in [\[Español\]](#)
- [Overview of Federal Eviction Moratorium](#)

National Updates

Congress

Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) and 28 of her Senate colleagues sent a [letter](#) to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on February 3 urging the Treasury Department to publish specific procedures addressing how people experiencing homelessness can access the stimulus payments provided in the latest coronavirus relief package.

Department of Treasury

Treasury released a list of emergency rental assistance (ERA) program [payments](#) to states and eligible units of local governments.

Reporting

A [USA Today](#) analysis found that Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) will overwhelmingly benefit white Americans living in less populated states, even though most Americans affected by the pandemic and economic recession live in the most populated states. "A more precise formula would better target resources to communities with the greatest needs if it were based on the number of cost-burdened and low-income renters," said NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel.

[CityLab](#) reports on the growing number of eviction filings in the U.S. and the many renters who are falling through the cracks of federal, state, and local eviction protections. "Generally speaking, the CDC moratorium is doing what it was intended to do. But there are many shortcomings in the order and an alarming number of evictions despite the moratorium," said NLIHC's Diane Yentel. "We have been [calling on Biden and CDC Director Walensky](#) to not only extend the moratorium, but to strengthen and improve and enforce it."

[Vice](#) examines the shortcomings of the federal eviction moratorium that have allowed landlords to continue evicting tenants, noting that [NLIHC and over 2,000 organizations](#) are calling on the Biden administration to extend, strengthen, and enforce the moratorium. NLIHC's Diane Yentel notes that while the moratorium is generally doing what it was intended to do, there are an "alarming number of evictions" occurring despite the order.

[Medical Xpress](#) discusses new research that finds eviction and utility shut-off moratoriums reduce COVID-19 infection rates and COVID-related deaths. NLIHC's Diane Yentel highlights the inextricable link between housing and health and the critical need for long-term investments in affordable housing.

The [New York Times](#) examines the pandemic's toll on housing, noting that COVID-19 has exacerbated our country's existing affordable housing crisis. Low-income tenants are doubling up with others, accruing debt, and falling behind on bills to remain housed. These financial scars will linger long after mass vaccinations.

An op-ed in the [Hill](#) urges Congress and the White House to include a \$44 billion affordable housing conversion initiative in the next COVID relief bill. With a sharp infusion of federal funds, tens of thousands of hotels and other distressed commercial properties can be converted into permanent affordable housing.

[Reuters](#) reports that tenant unions and anti-eviction activist groups across the country have seen their memberships explode during the pandemic. The article discusses how a months-long campaign by KC Tenants culminated in the delay of 854 evictions in Jackson County in January.

A [Marketplace-Edison Research Poll](#) examining sleeplessness found that 35% of Americans surveyed were losing sleep over their financial situations, specifically pandemic-related issues such as missed rent or mortgage payments, layoffs, and income loss. Lower-income individuals consistently get less sleep than those with higher incomes. The pandemic is [magnifying existing disparities](#), contributing to more sleeplessness, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods where people often live in overcrowded housing.

State and Local News

Arizona

Beginning on February 23, renters and landlords in [twelve Arizona counties](#) will be able to apply for the state's Emergency Rental Assistance Program using an online portal. Several large counties and cities, including Maricopa County, Pima County, and Yuma County, are receiving rental assistance funds directly from the federal government.

California

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti announced that [three hotels](#) the city had been renting under Project Roomkey will remain open until the end of September, but he stopped short of authorizing a major expansion of the hotel program. The three hotels total about 1,200 beds and were set to close either at the end of this month or next month. The city is working with California and FEMA to see it could receive Project Roomkey funds upfront.

Tenant advocates are [urging the Fresno City Council](#) to adopt a "right to counsel" program for renters facing eviction. Evidence from cities with similar programs suggests a right to counsel is critical in keeping renters housed. The California Judicial Council predicts that as many as [240,000 evictions](#) could be processed this year statewide, making right to counsel programs even more critical.

[ABC News](#) reports that U.S. District Judge David Carter presided over a hearing in a lawsuit seeking solutions for the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles at a shelter in the heart of the city's Skid Row. The lawsuit was filed by the LA Alliance for Human Rights, a group of business owners, residents, and community leaders, who allege that local officials have not done enough to address homelessness.

In Orange County, [825 individuals who are homeless](#) have contracted COVID-19, with 625 of those being shelter residents. The conditions at congregate shelters underscore the need for timely housing options for individuals experiencing homelessness. The county has purchased two hotel and motel sites through Project Homekey that will provide 132 units of non-congregate sheltering.

The [San Jose City Council](#) [voted unanimously](#) on February 2 to immediately halt rent increases for residents living in rent-controlled mobile homes and apartments through June 30. Renters must prove to their landlord they are facing hardship by submitting a [declaration](#) before the next scheduled annual rent increase. More than 37,000 Santa Clara County households owe a combined \$173.5 million in [back rent](#).

Colorado

The [Colorado Coalition for the Homeless](#) will begin leasing apartments at a 139 micro-apartment complex to house individuals experiencing homelessness. The complex is a former Quality Inn & Suites, which the Coalition purchased for \$8.4 million and converted into the micro-apartment complex in record time.

Florida

Orange County commissioners approved a [revision to the county's rental assistance program](#) that will increase the amount of money available from \$4,000 to \$10,000 per household. The county received \$33.4 million in federal rental assistance, which enabled the boost in funding. The [program](#) is scheduled to launch on March 1.

Georgia

[Fulton County](#) is developing its plan to distribute the \$18 million in rental assistance it has received from the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The county plans to launch the rent relief program on March 1. [DeKalb County](#) will launch its \$21 million rent relief program on Friday, February 12.

Hawaii

The [Department of Hawaiian Home Lands](#) (DHHL) received a federal funding allocation of \$2.4 million for rental assistance. The [DHHL COVID-19 relief program](#) began accepting applications on Monday, February 8.

Indiana

[Indiana housing advocates](#) are protesting a bill that could increase evictions. The Indiana General Assembly is set to vote on February 8 to override Governor Eric Holcomb's veto of Senate Bill 148. The bill would prevent individual cities from taking action on landlord and tenant matters, including expedited evictions and rental property regulations. Housing advocates, including [Prosperity Indiana](#), believe the bill is a public health threat, noting that it is more important than ever for families to have access to safe and affordable housing.

There are bipartisan concerns that an [Indiana bill](#) that would allow landlords to apply for the state's COVID-19 rental assistance program on behalf of their tenants could prevent renters from receiving aid. A [woman facing eviction](#) whose landlord denied rental assistance through the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority says the proposed bill puts "the power in the landlords hands yet again."

Louisiana

[New Orleans](#) Mayor LaToya Cantrell announced an expansion of the city's rental assistance program. New Orleans received a direct initial allocation of \$11.6 million from the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and the city is expecting an additional \$14 million from the state of Louisiana for rental assistance. The program will go live on February 15 and will begin taking applications through its [NOLA Ready website](#) in person or over the phone.

Maine

According to MaineHousing, about [2,000 applications](#) for the state's rent relief program that were filed before the program ended December 31 are still being processed. A report from the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition (MAHC) found that Mainers are falling behind on their rent payments, burning through their savings,

and skipping bills to stay housed. “The big thing that seems to (be) happening is the pressure is really building – more people are falling behind and they’re hanging on by their fingernails,” said MAHC Director Greg Payne.

Maryland

The [Washington Post](#) reports that as of December 31, Americans owed their gas and electric utilities an estimated \$32 billion. In the Washington region, residents most at risk of utility shut-offs are in Maryland, which began allowing them as of November 15.

An op-ed in [Baltimore Brew](#) outlines why Baltimore should purchase the motels and hotels currently being used for shelter and transform them into community land trusts. Hennepin County, Minnesota, and Lake Champlain, Vermont are using public funds to transform hotels and motels into permanent affordable housing.

Members of Housing our Neighbors are [calling on Baltimore officials](#) to extend and expand current hotel contracts to allow the city time to develop a permanent housing plan. Despite the executive order directing FEMA to provide 100% reimbursement for non-congregate shelters, city officials still plan to return individuals to group shelters as soon as March.

Massachusetts

[Cambridge city councilors](#) passed a proposal to rent non-congregate housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. Housing advocates [distributed flyers](#) to more than 1,200 households urging residents to give public comment in support of non-congregate shelters.

Nevada

Nevada lawmakers approved an allocation of [\\$124 million](#) in federal rental assistance funds. These funds are expected to benefit up to 20,000 households in the state, according to an estimate from the Nevada Housing Division.

New Jersey

Hamilton Township’s Department of Community and Economic Development has secured [more than \\$650,000](#) of its federal Community Development Block Grant - CARES (CDBG-CV) funds to provide [utility, rent, or mortgage payments](#).

North Carolina

On February 4, Governor Roy Cooper and the General Assembly [weighed in](#) on how to deploy the more than \$4 billion in federal relief money allocated to North Carolina through the December 2020 COVID-19 relief package. Governor Cooper released his [emergency supplemental budget recommendations](#) and the General Assembly passed legislation ([S.B. 36/H.B. 42](#)) outlining how legislators would like to deploy the latest rent relief resources.

[Guilford County](#) launched an emergency rental and utility assistance program on February 8. The program is funded through \$7.2 million from the U.S. Department of Treasury Funds. The county approved an additional \$747,000 for the County Emergency Rental and Utilities Assistance Program, bringing the total to \$8 million.

Ohio

Despite the federal eviction moratorium, Eviction Lab data indicate that over 160 people are evicted across Ohio each day. The moratorium’s protections are not automatic, and [many Ohio renters](#) are unaware of the steps they must take to be protected.

Oklahoma

An Oklahoma House committee [approved a bill](#) on February 10 that would prevent courts from halting evictions, even during a health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic. [House Bill 1564](#) says courts have no discretion to extend the terms of a lease. Several supporters of HB1564 on the House Business and Commerce Committee said that anyone who needed rental assistance was able to apply for it. Housing Solutions Executive Director Becky Gligo, however, says thousands of tenants applied for millions of dollars in rental assistance late last year, but there were instances where landlords rejected the funds or took it and then evicted tenants anyway.

Oregon

Oregon tenants collectively owe between [\\$249 million and \\$378 million](#) in unpaid rent as of January 2021. According to a study by Portland State University's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative, Oregon might be forced to spend between [\\$1 billion and \\$3.3 billion](#) to respond to mass evictions when the moratorium lifts.

Pennsylvania

The [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reports that landlords are [more than twice as likely](#) to file for evictions against Black renters in Philadelphia than against white renters. Based on the pre-pandemic trend, Black renters are more likely to be evicted when pandemic eviction moratoriums are lifted.

Governor Wolf on February 5 signed [Senate Bill 109](#), legislation directing the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services to administer the new Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance program. Many of the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania's recommendations were part of the legislation.

The [Pitt News Editorial Board](#) writes about the need for Pennsylvania to provide equitable rent relief.

Tennessee

The [Tennessee Housing Development Agency](#) is currently awaiting further guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury to launch the state's roughly \$458 million rental assistance program. The program is estimated to help 25,000 households.

[Shelby County](#) approved \$8.5 million in federal funding for rental assistance. The Memphis Tenants Union is calling on elected officials to provide more rental assistance and enact a ban on evictions and utility shut-offs.

Texas

Texas Governor Greg Abbott on February 9 [announced](#) that the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) has launched the [Texas Rent Relief Program](#) – the first statewide rent and utility assistance program. TDHCA will begin accepting applications for the \$1 billion program on Monday, February 15.

[Houston officials](#) are planning to pursue a “grace period” ordinance that would block evictions in the city through the end of March. Mayor Sylvester Turner said he wants to ensure renters are protected while the city and county work to develop a \$159 million rent relief program.

Utah

[Utah County](#) is considering splitting from the state's COVID-19 rental assistance program and launching its own program that would reduce application barriers and provide flexibility on the application requirements. The state received \$147 million for the Utah Rent Relief program, and Utah County received about \$19.2 million for rental assistance.

Washington

[Washington state lawmakers](#) are scrambling to pass relief to avoid mass evictions when the state’s eviction moratorium expires on March 31. In addition to providing financial assistance, some Democratic lawmakers are proposing an informal package of bills that would freeze rent hikes, require housing providers to have a “just cause” to evict, guarantee a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction, and prevent rental debt from making it more difficult to obtain housing in the future.

Washington, DC

Through a new program, DC Water aims to help low-income renters whose water bills are reflected in their monthly rent. The [DC Water Cares program](#) will provide discounts to landlords who would then pass along at least 90% of that to qualifying tenants’ rent.

Wisconsin

Despite the federal eviction moratorium, [Wisconsin renters](#) are falling through the cracks of the protections and being forced from their homes during the pandemic.

Wyoming

[Governor Mark Gordon](#) issued an [executive order](#) allowing the Wyoming Department of Family Services to begin preparing its distribution plan for the state’s \$200 million emergency rental assistance program. “The need for this program cannot be understated, but it requires significant work to run it effectively and that’s what begins now,” said Governor Gordon. Wyoming 2-1-1 reports a 280% increase in calls for rental assistance in 2020.

Guidance

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Interim Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccination Implementation](#) – Updated February 2, 2021

Department of Housing and Urban Development

[CDC Eviction Moratorium: FAQs for HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing](#) – Updated February 5, 2021

[COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Hotel/Motel Acquisitions for Permanent Housing](#)

[COVID-19 Flexible Subsidy Pool Fundamentals: Essentials and How to Get Started](#)

[COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Approach to Winter Planning – Plan A \[Projected Need\], Plan B \[Marginal Surge\], and Plan C \[Substantial Surge\]](#)

[Weekly COVID-19 Vaccine Update for Homeless Service Providers – February 5, 2021](#)

Department of Treasury

[Emergency Rental Assistance Program \(ERAP\) Payments to States and Eligible Units of Local Government](#)

Corporation for Supportive Housing

[Key Considerations for State and Local Jurisdictions Exploring Hotel/Motel Acquisitions as a Housing Strategy for People Exiting COVID-19 Shelters](#)

[The Road Ahead: Putting the Pieces Together for Hotel and Real Estate Conversion to Housing](#)

[Summary: Biden Administration’s “National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness” – January 2021](#)

[COVID-19 & the HCH Community | January 2021 Issue Brief: Consumer Perspectives of the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

HUD

HUD to Begin Implementation of Executive Order to Prevent and Combat Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity-Based Discrimination

HUD announced on February 11 that it will administer and enforce a fair housing provision that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. A [memorandum](#) stated that HUD will begin implementation of the policy set in forth in [President Biden’s Executive Order 138988 on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation](#) (see *Memo*, [01/25](#)). HUD is the first agency to release directives regarding the president’s day-one Executive Order.

The memorandum affirms that the decision made in U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton, County, Georgia*, applies to the Fair Housing Act. The ruling, made on June 15, 2020, held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act bars discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation (see *Memo*, [06/22](#)). The memorandum states that HUD will act according to the Bostock decision, the policy in President’s Biden’s Executive Order, and the Fair Housing Act, to address housing discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. The memorandum specifically states:

“The memorandum relies on the Department’s legal conclusion that the Fair Housing Act’s sex discrimination provisions are comparable in text and purpose to those of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which bars sex discrimination in the workplace. In *Bostock v Clayton County*, the Supreme Court held that workplace prohibitions on sex discrimination include discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity. HUD has now determined that the Fair Housing Act’s prohibition on sex discrimination in housing likewise includes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Accordingly, and consistent with President Biden’s Executive Order, HUD will enforce the Fair Housing Act to prevent and combat such discrimination.”

The memorandum also directs HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity and HUD-funded fair housing partners as follows:

- HUD will accept and investigate all jurisdictional complaints of sex discrimination, including discrimination because of gender identity or sexual orientation, and enforce the Fair Housing Act where it finds such discrimination occurred.
- HUD will conduct all activities involving the application, interpretation, and enforcement of the Fair Housing Act’s prohibition on sex discrimination consistent with its conclusion that such discrimination includes discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- State and local jurisdictions funded by HUD’s Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) that enforce the Fair Housing Act through their HUD-certified substantially equivalent laws will be required to administer those laws to prohibit discrimination because of gender identity and sexual orientation.

- Organizations and agencies that receive grants through the Department’s Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP) must carry out their funded activities to also prevent and combat discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- FHEO Regional Offices, FHAP agencies, and FHIP grantees are instructed to review, within 30 days, all records of allegations (inquiries, complaints, phone logs, etc.) received since January 20, 2020, and notify persons who alleged discrimination because of gender identity or sexual orientation that their claims may be timely and jurisdictional for filing under this memorandum.

While the memo notes no specific actions to address the previous administration’s proposed anti-transgender changes to the Equal Access Rule (see *Memo*, [06/22](#)), representatives from the White House and HUD assured stakeholders in a briefing call that updates are forthcoming. They reaffirmed a commitment to ensuring LGBTQ individuals receive full protection from housing discrimination. It is important to note that previous administration’s anti-transgender changes to the Equal Access Rule were never finalized and never went into effect.

The memorandum also extends to all housing covered by the Fair Housing Act and is therefore a broader application than the Equal Access Rule.

NLIHC will continue to inform readers on HUD’s implementation of President Biden’s Executive Order and updates to the Equal Access Rule.

If you believe you have experienced housing discrimination, you can file a complaint by contacting HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 877-8339 (TTY/Relay). Housing discrimination complaints may also be submitted online at hud.gov/fairhousing.

Read HUD’s press release on the Memorandum: <http://bit.ly/373GCvA>

Read HUD’s press release on members of Congress and advocates’ response to the Memorandum: <http://bit.ly/2ZdaZLq>

Read the Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation at: <http://bit.ly/3p5Ogvq>

NLIHC Events

“Racial Equity and Housing Justice” to be Featured at NLIHC Virtual Housing Policy Forum 2021, March 30-31

NLIHC’s **Virtual Housing Policy Forum 2021: A New Day**, taking place March 30-31 from 1-5 pm ET, will feature a special session on racial equity and housing justice, examining the history of racist housing policy in the U.S., how centuries of structural racism have created tremendous inequities in housing, and how those inequities can be undone. Panelists and speakers will explore the role of housing policies in causing our nation's racial disparities and discuss strategies to advance racial justice. Register today to attend this and other compelling sessions at: <http://bit.ly/NLIHCForum21>



There will also be special presentations from key leaders in Congress, including **Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)**, **Senator Rob Portman (R-OH)**, and **Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA)**, as well as keynote speakers and panels on Best Practices in Organizing; What the Elections Mean for Affordable Housing/Capitol Hill Insiders Panel; State and Local Emergency Rental Assistance Programs; Achieving Universal Housing Assistance; Lessons Learned from the Pandemic for the Future of Housing and Homelessness; Sharing Resident Lived-Experience Stories with Elected Officials; and more.

Register at: <http://bit.ly/NLIHCForum21>

Honor Sen. Sherrod Brown and other NLIHC 2021 Housing Leadership Awards Recipients

Make a [contribution to NLIHC](#) in honor of 2021 Housing Leadership Award Honoree **Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)**, chair of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee. Senator Brown will receive a 2021 Edward W. Brooke Housing Leadership Award for his many years of fighting for racial and social justice, voting rights, and affordable housing, and for his exceptional leadership in Congress to address to the housing and homelessness crisis during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. This award is named for Senator Edward Brooke (R-MA), who championed low-income housing as a U.S. senator and later as chair of the NLIHC board of directors. Donate to NLIHC in Senator Brown's honor as an [individual](#) or as an [organization](#).



Sen. Sherrod Brown

The other honorees in 2021 are **Representative Maxine Waters** (D-CA), chair of the House Financial Services Committee, who will also be bestowed an Edward Brooke W. Housing Leader Award; **Joy Johnson**, long-time resident leader of the Charlottesville Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR) and former NLIHC board member, who will receive the Cushing Dolbeare Lifetime Service Award; and the **Housing Justice Network** of the National Housing Law Project, which will receive the Sheila Crowley Housing Justice Award. These exceptional leaders will be recognized at NLIHC's 39th Annual Housing Leadership Awards Celebration held virtually on Wednesday April 28.

Recognize these outstanding leaders by making a donation to NLIHC in their honor!

Donate as an individual at: <https://bit.ly/2Kd9oRZ>

Donate as an organization at: <https://bit.ly/2LpBbzy>

Or text LEADERSHIP to 41444 to donate in honor of the awardees.

Your donation will be recognized in the Leadership Awards Celebration program. The contribution will support NLIHC's mission to achieve socially just public policy to ensure the lowest-income people have decent, affordable homes.

Registration information to attend the Housing Leadership Awards Celebration will be forthcoming.

NLIHC to Host Advocacy and Policy Priorities Webinars on March 11 and 25

NLIHC will host two webinars in March on effective advocacy and policy priorities in preparation for NLIHC's annual Capitol Hill Day on April 1. Capitol Hill Day, part of [NLIHC's 2021 Virtual Housing Policy Forum: A New Day](#), March 30-31, will be conducted virtually this year because of the pandemic.

The first webinar, on March 11 at 3 pm ET, will provide an introduction to effective advocacy. The NLIHC field team will cover basics of federal policymaking, key moments for advocates to be involved, allowable advocacy activities for nonprofits, and tips for effective advocacy. The session will also include a practice legislative visit. The webinar is an excellent training opportunity for those new to advocacy. Register for the March 11 webinar at: <https://bit.ly/3tLGgTP>

The second webinar, on March 25 at 3 pm ET, will provide an overview of NLIHC’s policy priorities and talking points. The NLIHC policy team will highlight major legislative requests and provide information that compellingly makes the case for increased federal investment in affordable homes. The field team will provide examples of how advocates can connect these priorities with their work and experiences during their legislative visits. Register for the March 25 webinar at: <https://bit.ly/3rGPsHk>

Register for NLIHC’s 2021 Virtual Housing Policy Forum: A New Day, March 30-31, at: <https://www.nlihcforum.org/>

Opportunity Starts at Home

National League of Cities CEO Urges Congress to Act on Campaign’s Housing Priorities

Clarence Anthony, CEO of the National League of Cities (NLC), testified before the House Committee on Financial Services on February 4. Mr. Anthony urged Congress to act on the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign’s housing priorities, along with other priorities such as COVID-19 fiscal relief for local governments. Mr. Anthony submitted written testimony that read: “As a partner of the multi-jurisdictional *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign and Mayors and CEO’s for U.S. Housing Investment, NLC has endorsed a set of specific funding recommendations: 1) \$30 billion for emergency rental and utility assistance; 2) \$28 billion in new funding for Housing Choice Vouchers; 3) \$8 billion in new funding for Emergency Solutions Grants; and 4) \$44 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund.”

“There is no question additional housing aid is necessary,” Mr. Anthony said in his remarks. “That was the case before COVID-19, and it remains the case today.”



NLC is a Steering Committee member of the *Opportunity Starts at Home* multisector affordable homes campaign. Watch the webcast of the hearing [here](#). Read the written testimony [here](#). Also, check out NLC’s report, “[Affordable Housing & Health City Roles and Strategies for Progress](#),” which explores ways local leaders can work toward healthy, equitable, and affordable housing.

Follow the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign on social media: [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Be sure to [sign up](#) for our e-newsletter to get the latest updates about the campaign, including new multi-sector partners, [calls to action](#), events, and [research](#).

Research

Renters with Children, Older Households, Households with Less Education More Likely to Face Eviction or Other Forms of Displacement

A paper in *City & Community*, “[Predicting Mobility: Who is Forced to Move?](#),” uses the 2013 *American Housing Survey* (AHS) to examine which households are more likely to experience voluntary or forced moves. The authors use a broad definition of displacement that includes evictions, foreclosures, and other reasons why households might involuntarily leave housing. The study found that renter households with children, older householders, and householders with less education are more likely to experience an eviction or forced move.

According to the 2013 AHS, more than 48% of renters had voluntarily moved in the previous two years, as had 11% of homeowners. Renters were approximately three times more likely to experience an involuntary move: 2.3% of renters were forced to move, compared to less than 0.7% of homeowners. The authors categorized reported causes of involuntary moves into private displacement (e.g., condominium conversion, owner taking over unit), government displacement (e.g., condemnation of home), disaster loss, eviction, and foreclosure.

White renters and those with higher education are more likely than Black renters to move voluntarily. Renters with children are more likely to experience a forced move than renters without children, as are householders 65 or older compared to householders under age 35. Analysis of involuntary moves suggested that Asian and Black renters are less likely than white renters to experience private displacement. Renters with higher levels of education are less likely to experience eviction, as are younger renters.

The authors note that their sample may undercount and not represent the experiences of the most precariously housed households. The households included in this sample were all able to obtain new housing after their involuntary move, but people in homeless shelters or living on the street after their forced move are not included in the AHS.

The authors found no singular set of characteristics to be predictive of the risk of displacement across all five categories of displacement (private displacement, government displacement, disaster loss, eviction, foreclosure). Their findings suggest it might be inappropriate to study displacement as a monolithic social phenomenon—that each type of displacement might be best examined on its own.

The paper can be found at: <https://bit.ly/3a4nFe7>

Economic Security Programs Reduce Poverty and Inequality

A report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “[Economic Security Programs Reduce Overall Poverty, Racial and Ethnic Inequities](#),” shows that economic security programs significantly reduce poverty and poverty disparities across racial and ethnic lines, lifting a higher percentage of Black and Latino individuals out of poverty than whites. Despite this finding, Black and Latino individuals still experience poverty at much higher rates than white individuals. To address these disparities, CBPP calls for strengthened economic security programs, including expanding housing assistance, TANF, tax credit programs, and SNAP.

Using the Supplemental Poverty Measure, which accounts for additional forms of individual income and expenses compared to the Official Poverty Measure, the researchers examine how government assistance and taxes influenced poverty rates and disparities in poverty across racial and ethnic lines in 1970 to 2017.

The researchers found that economic security programs have become more effective at both reducing poverty and narrowing racial and ethnic disparities. In 1970, government programs reduced the white poverty rate by 2

percentage points and the Black poverty rate by 4 percentage points. Meanwhile, these programs and taxes *increased* the poverty rate among Latinos by 3 percentage points because tax payments outweighed government benefits. In 2017, government assistance programs lowered both the white and Latino poverty rate by 12 percentage points and the Black poverty rate by 16 percentage points. Despite these improvements, significant racial and ethnic disparities persist. After accounting for government assistance programs, Black and Latino individuals still experience poverty at double the rate of white individuals. Ten percent of white individuals experienced poverty in 2017, compared to 21% of Black individuals and 20% of Latino individuals.

Economic security programs have also greatly reduced poverty rates among children. In 1970, assistance programs and taxes slightly *increased* poverty among white and Latino children, and reduced poverty among Black children by 3.7 percentage points. In 2017, government assistance and taxes reduced poverty among all children by 11.8 percentage points, with greater reductions among Black and Latino children. The programs reduced poverty among Black and Hispanic children by 20.4 and 16.1 percentage points, respectively, compared to 7.4 percentage points among white children.

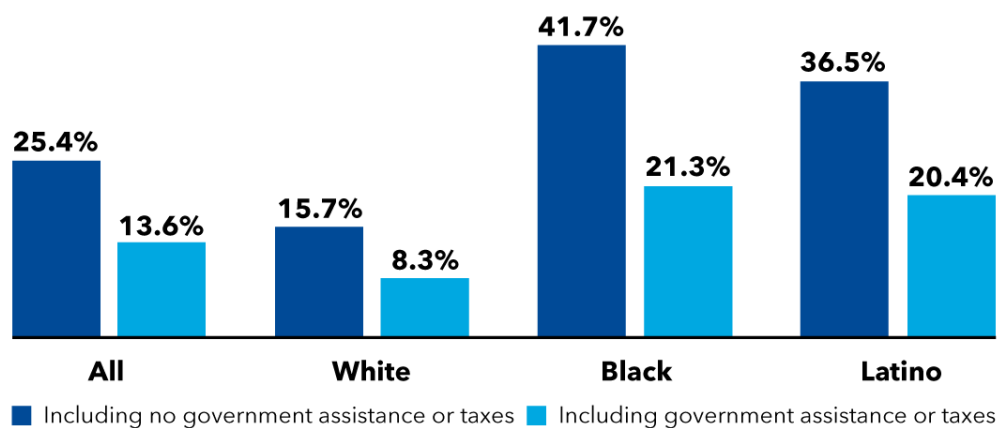
Despite these improvements, further actions are needed to reduce poverty rates and racial and ethnic disparities. CBPP estimates that two packages of policy proposals from the National Academies of Sciences would cut child poverty rates and racial and ethnic disparities among children in half. The proposals include expanding housing vouchers and food assistance, strengthening the earned income tax credit and childcare assistance programs, providing a universal childcare allowance, and increasing the minimum wage. CBPP notes that along with strengthening these programs, the government must commit to addressing discrimination and its impacts to directly target systemic disparities. These policy solutions are even more pressing today, given the economic impact of COVID-19, which has disproportionately affected Black and Latino households.

The report can be found at: <https://bit.ly/2N85yuz>

Fact of the Week

Without Government Assistance, Child Poverty Rates Would Be Much Higher

Percent of Children in Poverty, With & Without Government Assistance and Taxes Included, 2017



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2021). CBPP analysis of Supplemental Poverty Measure data from U.S. Census Bureau, corrections for underreported benefits from Department of Health and Human Services/Urban Institute Transfer Income Model.

From the Field

Advocates Secure Renter Protections for Suburban Households in Cook County, Illinois

The Cook County Board of Commissioners passed the “Residential Tenant Landlord Ordinance” (RTLO) unanimously on January 28, securing renter protections for 245,000 households not covered by local ordinances. The RTLO creates a basic code of conduct between landlords and tenants regarding lease terms, repairs, and other provisions to promote safe, healthy living conditions in rental properties. Similar ordinances have long been in place in a few Cook County cities and towns—Chicago, Evanston, and Mount Prospect—but prior to passage of the RTLO, renters in other communities could only make use of the extremely limited tenant protections in Illinois state law. The impact of the ordinance is significant: with more than 5.1 million residents, Cook County is the second largest county in the nation.

Over the course of several months, and in the face of strong and vocal opposition from interest groups representing rental property owners, Housing Action Illinois—an NLIHC state partner—worked alongside Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance, Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing, and other campaign partners to ensure passage of the RTLO. Additional partners included organizations representing voucher holders (Housing Choice Partners), people with disabilities (Progress CIL), and immigrants (PASO).

Tenant leaders from these groups advocated in favor of this legislation from their expertise as low-income renters made even more vulnerable by the intersection of race, disability, and immigration status. They provided testimony, spoke with legislators, conducted socially distanced door-to-door outreach, and shared their stories with the media to fight for their rights as renters.

Campaign partners held an RTLO Week of Action in December, educating commissioners and the public through fact sheets and Facebook Live events, creating a “Twitterstorm” to raise awareness, and emailing and calling commissioners. Overall, more than 65 organizations endorsed the campaign, ranging from tenants’ rights groups, housing and homelessness organizations, policy centers, and faith groups.

The campaign also utilized NLIHC’s [The Gap](#) report to illustrate that extending tenant protections would significantly help communities of color. Low-income tenants are disproportionately people of color and they are disproportionately impacted by the lack of protections for tenant landlord engagement.

On the Cook County Board, Commissioners Scott Britton (14th District) and Kevin Morrison (15th District) championed the effort. Commissioners Britton and Morrison introduced the RTLO in July 2020 after securing feedback on the content of the ordinance from a wide range of stakeholders. Throughout the campaign, Commissioners Britten and Morrison worked in a partnership way with campaign leaders to negotiate with the opposition, develop and implement a media and communications strategy, and secure the votes necessary for passage.

Other provisions of the RTLO include:

- Restricting retaliatory conduct and undisclosed landlord entry
- Protecting owners against property destruction and abandonment
- Banning unlawful lockouts
- Providing consistency on how and when landlords can safely evict renters

- Prohibiting lease terms that waive written notices, rights to a trial, and disclosures
- Blocking landlords from charging exorbitant late rent fees
- Improving procedures for completing minor repairs in a timely manner
- Guaranteeing fair security deposit returns
- Preventing nontransparent move-in charges
- Allowing landlords a two-business day right to cure noncompliance with leases

These provisions clarify the roles and responsibilities of tenants and landlords and make the rental landscape easier and fairer for navigate for everyone. While the full RTLO goes into effect on June 1, the anti-lockout provision took effect immediately.

“When everyone knows the rules, it’s easier to play by them,” said Sheila Sutton, housing policy organizer at Housing Action Illinois. “The RTLO lays out basic expectations for landlord while protecting the dignity and basic rights of renters and creating processes to follow when something goes wrong. It’s long past time all renters in Cook County were given these essential protections.”

For more information about the Housing Action Illinois and the Residential Tenant Landlord Ordinance, visit: <https://housingactionil.org/>

NLIHC News

Follow NLIHC on Social Media and Stay Connected to the Latest Housing News

Connect with NLIHC on all our social media platforms: [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#) as we bring the latest housing issues to your feed. We will provide insights into key housing policy issues, the remarkable work of affordable housing advocates across the country, and more.

Follow us today!

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Week of February 7

The following are some of the news stories that NLIHC contributed to during the week of February 7:

- “The CDC’s eviction moratorium was supposed to protect renters. They’re still winding up homeless,” *Vice*, February 11 at: <https://bit.ly/2Z84E49>
- “Why can't the government stop evictions?” *CityLab*, February 11 at: <https://tinyurl.com/4sn6bm05>
- “How much rent relief will I get? You're more likely to get help if you're white and live in rural America,” *USA Today*, February 10 at: <http://bit.ly/370wN17>

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