Congress Must Prioritize Housing Measures in Stimulus Bills

Please include a national moratorium on evictions and at least $50 billion in emergency rental assistance in upcoming economic recovery legislation. In addition, please speak out publicly in support of a refundable renters’ tax credit to help families access affordable housing as a long-term priority.

The Affordable Housing Crisis in a Pandemic

Millions of low-income working families are struggling to pay rent as layoffs skyrocket due to the COVID-19 outbreak. According to the Urban Institute, half of American households with incomes below the poverty line cannot afford an unexpected expense of $400. Before the outbreak, families were already struggling to afford housing in the U.S., especially renters of color (right). Some startling information before the COVID pandemic:

- According to Harvard researchers, since 1960 renters’ median earnings have gone up 5 percent while rents have risen by 61 percent.
- A worker making the prevailing minimum wage cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment in any U.S. state (https://reports.nlihc.org/oor).
- Only one in four eligible low-income households receives federal housing assistance.
- Over 70 percent of extremely low-income renters spent more than half their income on housing.

Almost 1 in 3 Americans do not think they can stay housed if the U.S. falls into recession. We urge Congress to provide at least $50 billion in emergency rental assistance and enact a national moratorium on evictions until the crisis passes. These measures will secure the health and well-being of families and communities by helping millions of low-income renters stay in their homes.

We must also look ahead. A refundable renters’ tax credit for low-income renters would help increase housing affordability by helping families with rising rent costs. A renters’ credit – paired with measures to increase the supply of affordable housing and reduce evictions – would help ensure more families have a safe, affordable place to live in good times and bad. Columbia University researchers estimate that a renters’ credit could lift over 9 million Americans above the poverty line. Senators Booker (D-NJ) (H.R. 4808/S. 2684) and Harris (D-CA) (H.R. 2169/S. 1106), and Heller (R-NV) (S. 3580) in the last Congress, have all introduced renters’ credit legislation. We ask that you publicly voice support for a renters’ tax credit in addition to communicating support directly to House Ways and Means Committee Leaders Richard Neal and Kevin Brady or Senate Finance Committee Leaders Chuck Grassley and Ron Wyden.