

# Preface

*By Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD)*

Each year *Out of Reach* brings to the attention of federal, state and local policymakers, housing advocates and the public the stark contrast between the nation's housing needs and the persistent gap between what hard working Americans earn and what they must spend in order to obtain decent housing. As this year's report highlights, families all across the country are having to work two and even three jobs to be able to afford housing for their families and loved ones.

Housing is an integral component to creating economic opportunities and healthy communities. Neighborhoods without a stable and vibrant housing stock cannot attract economic development and investment. Children in precarious housing situations suffer from health problems that include asthma and lead poisoning. In many instances, families without stable housing are unable to access quality health care, educational and employment opportunities.

It has always been my belief that we must work to ensure that every American is able to obtain adequate and affordable housing, and we must not sacrifice policies and programs that provide Americans with housing opportunities to tax cuts that overwhelmingly benefit those wealthiest Americans. It is imperative that we help foster employment and educational opportunities and healthier and safer communities, efforts that will benefit all of us.

In reviewing the data contained in this report, one must remember that each of these numbers represents thousands of families who are confronted with difficult decisions every day as to whether to pay the rent, pay for health care or medications, or, in some instances, pay for food and other necessities. While it may be easy to look at these numbers and become disheartened and overwhelmed, we must not do so. We must use the information in this report to help fight for increased affordable housing opportunities for all those in need.

The information gathered each year by the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that while providing affordable housing to those who need it most, while a complex and considerable challenge, is not an insurmountable one. But it will require persistent advocacy and attention on the part of all of us, and the wisdom and dedication on the part of those leaders who are instrumental in crafting housing policies that truly reflect the values of our decent and just society.

This edition of *Out of Reach* provides us with a stark reminder of the challenges confronting us and a tool with which to help undertake and address them.