

TENANT TALK

WINTER 2020 | VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

DURING

THE PATH TO HOUSING

REENTRY

**NUISANCE
ORDINANCES**

**NO ACCESS
TO LEGAL
COUNSEL**

**UNFAIR
SCREENING
STANDARDS**

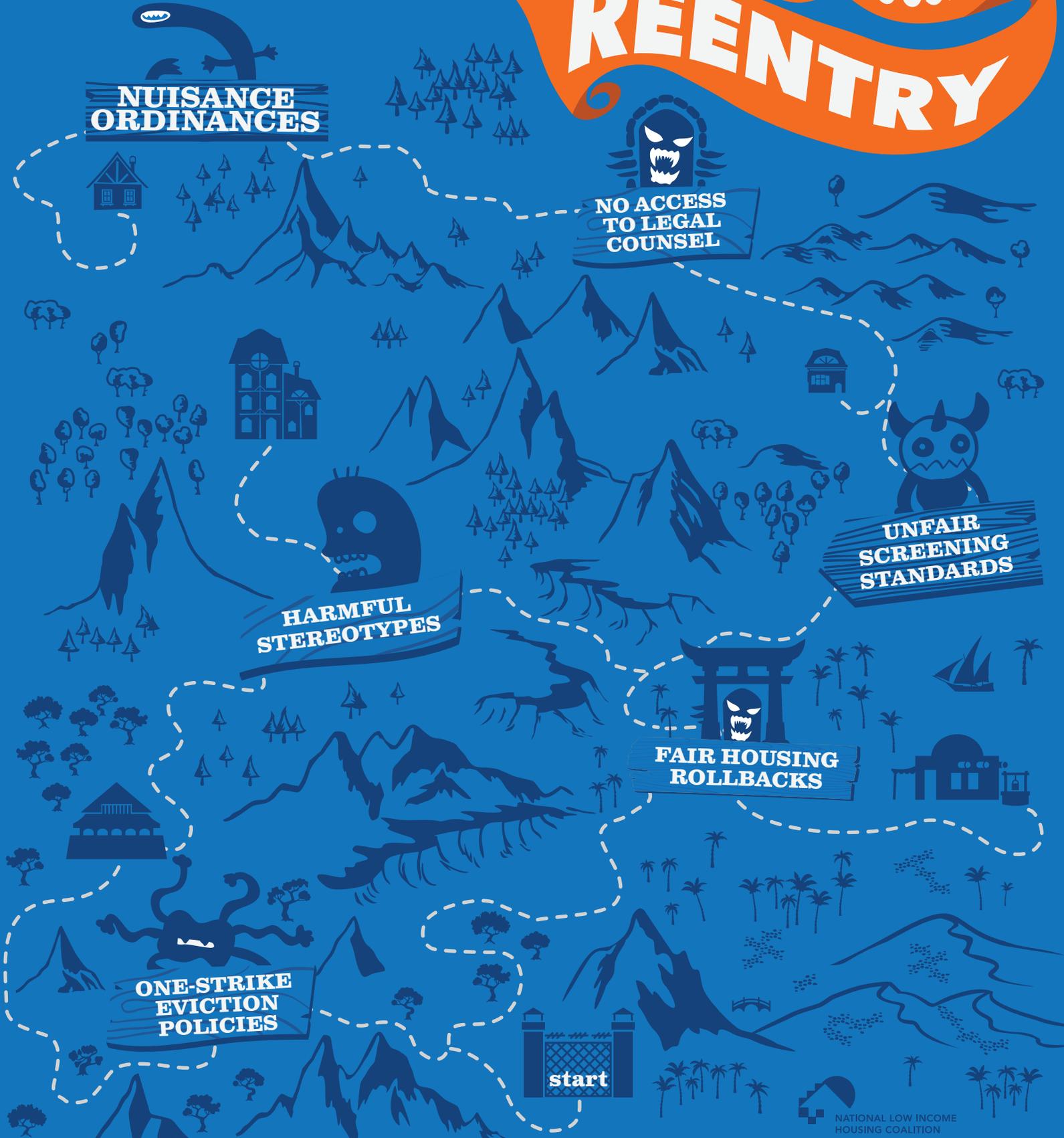
**HARMFUL
STEREOTYPES**

**FAIR HOUSING
ROLLBACKS**

**ONE-STRIKE
EVICTION
POLICIES**

start

NATIONAL LOW INCOME
HOUSING COALITION



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NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

ABOUT NLIHC

The National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated solely to achieving socially just public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes.

A key part of our work is through public education and engagement. NLIHC is committed to sharing resources and tools that help individuals become informed advocates. *Tenant Talk* is one of the many resources we provide to the public.

BECOME A MEMBER

NLIHC relies heavily on the support of our members to fund our work and to guide our policy decisions. Members are our strength! Hundreds of low income residents and resident organizations have joined the NLIHC community by becoming members.

We suggest an annual membership rate of only \$5 for a low-income individual membership, and \$15 for a low income resident organization. Please consider becoming a member of NLIHC today at nlihc.org/membership.

Cover and Layout: Design by Ikra Rafi, NLIHC Creative Services Specialist

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Dear Readers,

The U.S. makes up about 5% of the world population but has more than 20% of the world's prison population. Incarceration has skyrocketed over the last several decades, and our country's most marginalized communities bear the brunt of the cruelties of our criminal justice system. This cruelty expands beyond prisons, as over 6 million Americans are under the correctional supervision of parole or probation. Even without arrests and convictions, there is persistent over-policing of certain communities such as homeless populations and people of color.

Recent presidential administrations have made nonviolent offender sentencing reform a priority, and 2020 presidential candidates have called for unprecedented changes, like allowing incarcerated individuals the right to vote and abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Prisoners in parts of the country have taken matters into their own hands with large-scale strikes in protest of inhumane conditions. The appetite for meaningful change is growing.

People leaving incarceration face numerous issues when they return to their communities. These needs often go unaddressed. Returning individuals must adjust to fewer job prospects, fractured social ties, and decreasing housing availability. This issue of *Tenant Talk* is devoted to the housing obstacles returning prisoners must overcome and how those obstacles must be addressed.

The criminal justice system intersects with housing justice in many ways, including that formerly convicted individuals must navigate significant barriers to accessing affordable housing. Broad background checks that lack nuance, landlord discrimination, and outright bans by housing authorities are just several of the barriers people returning to society face when seeking housing. Our neighbors experiencing homelessness have increasingly found themselves interacting with law enforcement in recent years, and the current administration has used rhetoric suggesting they plan to further criminalize unhoused people.

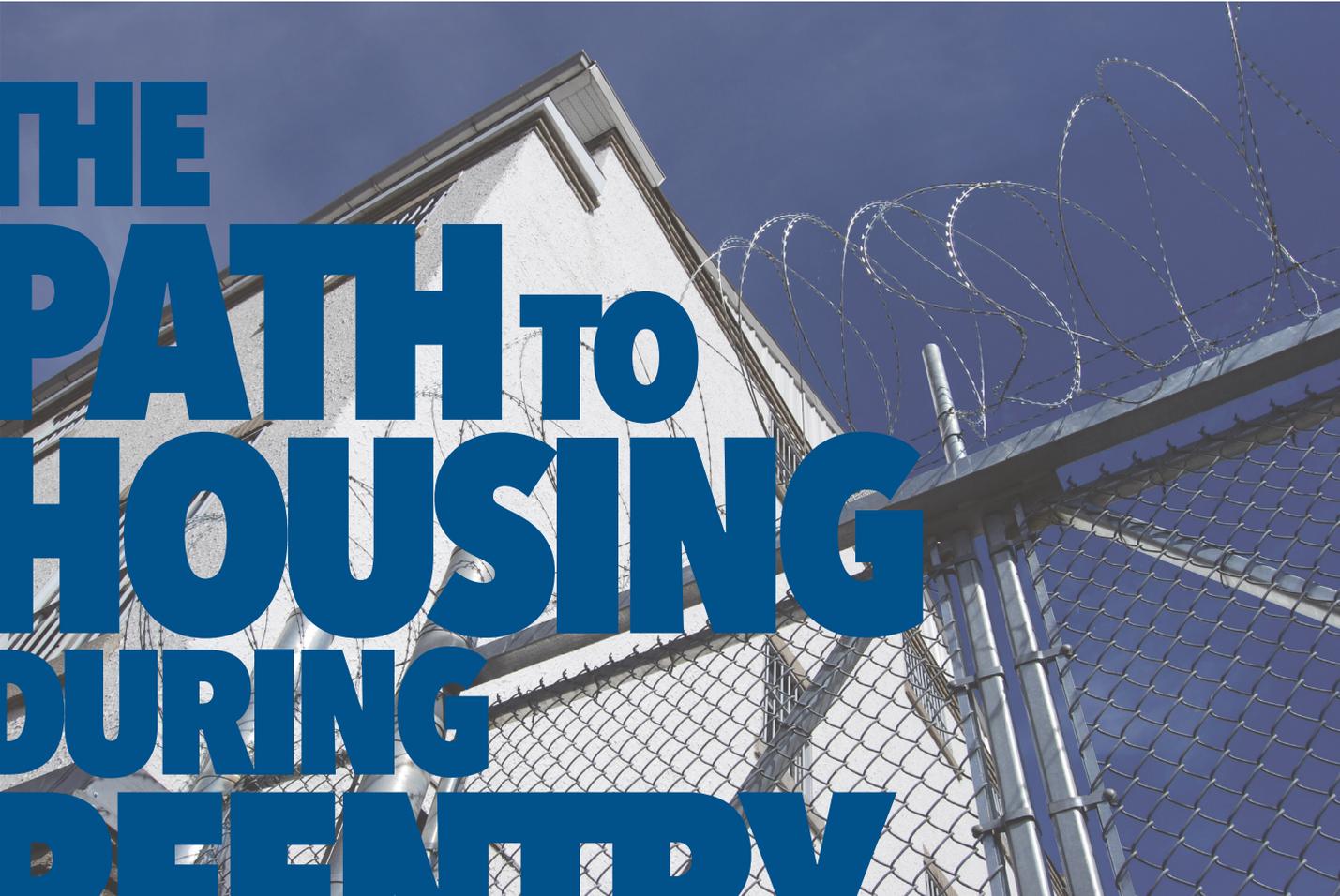
There is ample data on how Housing First policies reduce recidivism and homelessness, but the fight for the rights of those experiencing homelessness, the formerly incarcerated, and those entangled with the criminal justice system is a question of moral courage as well. While, yes, the data make the case, we also must make the case that people are more than their mistakes and should be afforded second chances in life.

We've said it before, and we'll keep saying it—housing is a human right. We must extend that right even to those who some in society shun as irredeemable. The fight for housing justice IS the fight for criminal justice.

Onward, Editorial Board



A Letter
from the
**EDITORIAL
BOARD**



THE PATH TO HOUSING DURING REENTRY

Overview of Issue

The “War on Drugs” and welfare reform have affected much of our nation’s poverty reduction efforts in the past several decades, including programs intended to address housing poverty. Examples include several laws that give public housing agencies (PHAs) much wider discretion over applicants for project-based Section 8, Housing Choice Voucher, and public housing programs. Private landlords and property management companies also have their own rules unfairly screening applicants.

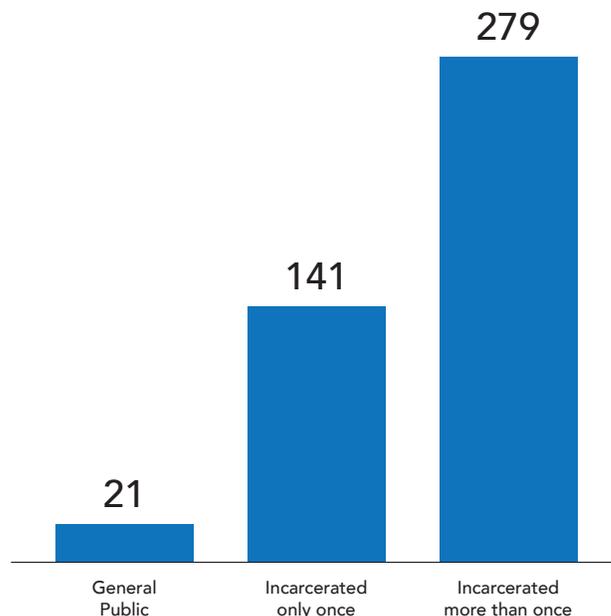
The punitive restrictions put in place by Congress and HUD coincide with an increase in housing insecurity and homelessness among those reentering society from the justice system. In many cases these individuals are among the people that need housing assistance most. Released prisoners face significant stigma, especially when applying for housing. In 2018, the Prison Policy Initiative estimated that formerly incarcerated people were ten times more likely to be homeless than the general public.

The Prison Policy Initiative also found that 15% of incarcerated people experience homelessness one year prior to entering prison. People who have been to prison just once experience homelessness at a rate seven times higher than the general public. Black people are disproportionately imprisoned, and formerly incarcerated Black women experience four times the risk of homelessness compared to white men.

The barriers that criminal justice-involved people face when attempting to reenter society, particularly in finding housing, are profound and deeply concerning. There is a revolving door between people leaving the criminal justice system, struggling to find housing, and ending up homeless—only to be criminalized while they are homeless. Read further to learn more about the various roadblocks people face when trying to secure housing after being involved with the criminal justice system, but also the solutions communities and advocates are advancing.

The revolving door of prison contributes to homelessness

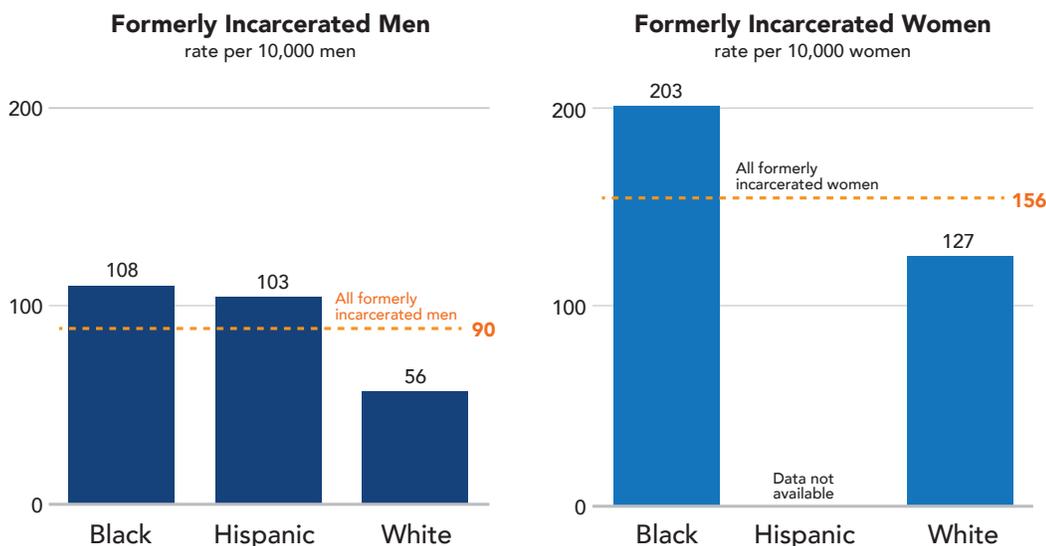
Number of people experiencing homelessness in 2008, per 10,000 population



Source: Prison Policy Initiative

Gender, race, and ethnicity combine to put women of color at greater risk of homelessness

Number of formerly incarcerated people per 10,000 experiencing sheltered homelessness when surveyed in 2008
Sources & data notes: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html#methodology>



“
In 2018, the Prison Policy Initiative estimated that formerly incarcerated people were ten times more likely to be homeless than the general public.
”

Figure 2. Rates of sheltered homelessness among formerly incarcerated people differ widely by race and gender, with Black women nearly four times more likely than white men to be living in a homeless shelter.

Source: Prison Policy Initiative

Criminalization of Homelessness

The criminalization of homelessness in the U.S. has a long history, with laws against “vagrancy” dating back to the 18th century. These laws punished people experiencing homelessness for engaging in activities required for survival. The Supreme Court decided laws against vagrancy were too broad and declared them unconstitutional in 1972. Cities, however, still pass ordinances punishing people experiencing homelessness for engaging in life-sustaining activities in public, including sleeping, eating, camping, panhandling, or living in vehicles.

People already disproportionately affected by homelessness – including people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and people with mental or physical disabilities – are also more likely to be impacted by criminalization.



Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Boise Decision

In October 2009, eleven people experiencing homelessness sued the city of Boise, Idaho, for enforcing laws that banned sleeping or camping in public places. By September 2018, *Martin v. Boise* made its way to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, a federal court with authority over many western states. The court ruled that people experiencing homelessness cannot be punished for sitting, lying down, or sleeping outside on public property if they have nowhere else to go.

In response to the decision, the City of Boise requested the Supreme Court review the case, and in December 2019 the Supreme Court announced they would not consider *Martin v. Boise*. This decision means that the 9th Circuit ruling – that people who are homeless cannot be criminally punished for simply trying to survive – will be upheld in the states under the 9th Circuit’s authority. The decision also sets an important example for other courts that might consider similar lawsuits in the future.

Marbut Appointed to Head USICH

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) coordinates the federal response to homelessness across 19 federal agencies and gives local governments guidance on the best ways to address homelessness. For more than a decade, the agency has recommended “Housing First” solutions to homelessness. Housing First stresses the importance of providing people experiencing homelessness with safe, stable, accessible housing *before* trying to address other underlying problems they might have, such as substance abuse or an untreated mental illness. The effectiveness of Housing First is supported by years of research.



Newly appointed USICH Executive Director Robert Marbut

In November 2019, President Trump appointed Robert Marbut as executive director of USICH. Before his appointment to USICH, Dr. Marbut had started his own company consulting with various cities on solutions to homelessness. His “solutions” include setting up large-scale shelters with treatment facilities, where people experiencing homelessness “earn” food and the ability to sleep inside through “good behavior.”

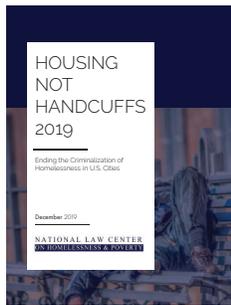
Dr. Marbut rejects the proven success of Housing First and has said cities enable homelessness by providing free meals and allowing people to sleep in public places.

These statements reflect Dr. Marbut’s belief that homelessness is caused by peoples’ personal failings, ignoring the systemic inequalities and lack of affordable housing for extremely low-income people that actually cause homelessness.

Dr. Marbut says he does not support large-scale arrests of people experiencing homelessness, but he has recommended expanding law enforcement’s ability to incarcerate or fine people experiencing homelessness for violating minor laws. Advocates express concerns that the appointment of Dr. Marbut will bring a retreat from proven Housing First efforts and increased criminalization.

Housing Not Handcuffs

Every day across America, thousands of people experiencing homelessness are arrested, ticketed, or fined simply for trying to survive in the absence of adequate housing. In response, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP) and the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) launched the *Housing Not Handcuffs* campaign in 2016 to unite people and organizations that previously had not worked together around the goal of ending the criminalization of homelessness. The effort has built a network of more than 1000 endorsers and 300 organizations (including NLIHC) with various missions and wide-ranging approaches. It includes people with lived experience, elected officials, housing justice attorneys, civil rights groups, homeless and housing service providers, and smart-government consultants. View a list of endorsers and join the campaign at: <http://housingnohandcuffs.org/endorsements/>



NLCHP detailed the problem of homelessness criminalization in its [Housing Not Handcuffs 2019 report](#), including lots of helpful information for advocates confronting local ordinances and police practices that criminalize homelessness. NLCHP finds that criminalization of homeless populations has increased dramatically in recent years, with 72% of 187 cities surveyed having at least one law restricting camping in public and an astonishing 55% of cities having laws restricting the mere act of sitting or lying down in public spaces.

The authors also offer a number of case studies and solutions to criminalization, calling for efforts to end homelessness instead of punishing it. They call for the broader adoption of the “Housing First” model of rapidly rehousing people experiencing homelessness and providing them permanent supportive housing. The authors urge policy makers to expand federal housing subsidies serving the lowest-income individuals. *Housing Not Handcuffs* calls on governments to empower low-income renters with “just-cause” eviction protections and right to counsel. The campaign has a wealth of fact sheets, model policies, talking points, and sample op-eds advocates can use to join in the call for “Housing, Not Handcuffs” at: <http://housingnohandcuffs.org/>

Controversy: Using Jail Space for Shelter

Several cities are responding to the increased demand for emergency shelter beds for homeless individuals by using former or unused jails as temporary overflow shelters.

The growing movement to use jail space for shelter is controversial, and local proposals to repurpose these facilities are facing public opposition.

Supporters argue these local decisions are well-intentioned efforts to support unhoused community members without bearing the cost of building something new. Others are concerned this growing trend creates a harmful perceived connection between crime and poverty. Opponents also argue that transforming jail space into mass homeless shelters is not a cost-effective approach to addressing our country’s affordable housing and homelessness crisis. Local debates about using jail space to shelter people experiencing homelessness taking place in Portland, OR, and Las Animas, CO, are discussed below.

Wapato Debate – Portland

A controversial proposal to transform a vacant county jail into a homeless center is under discussion in Multnomah County, Oregon. Wapato Corrections Facility, a minimum-security prison in North Portland, cost \$54 million to build but the facility never opened due to unexpected budget cuts. After paying off the bond that funded its construction in 2018, Multnomah County sold the property to private owners for \$5 million. Jordan Schnitzer, a Portland developer, bought the facility with plans to convert it into a community center for homeless residents. In October 2019, Mr. Schnitzer announced the property would be torn down due to a lack of funding and support from elected officials and homeless advocacy organizations.

According to a [Multnomah County press release](#) from October 2019, resistance to Mr. Schnitzer’s plan to transform the vacant jail facility into a homeless shelter includes concerns with its cost, type of building, and location.

Homeless service providers, community members, business leaders, and people with lived-experience argue Wapato is not an appropriate, sustainable, or cost-effective option for addressing homelessness in the region.

The County confirmed it would prioritize funding longer-term housing programs rather than mass emergency shelters. Funding Wapato would require \$18 million per year, and the County argues this money could create 1,000 permanent homes with support services instead.

In December 2019, Mr. Schnitzer and leaders of the local nonprofit Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers announced a new plan to convert the property into a shelter with comprehensive on-site services. City and state land-use restrictions do not allow mass shelters, short-term housing, or group-living facilities on industrial lands, but some backers of the Wapato conversion believe the city may vote to overturn these regulations. Mr. Schnitzer agreed to commit \$1 million to help the conversion become a reality, but the campaign must raise at least \$2 million more.

Fort Lyon – Colorado

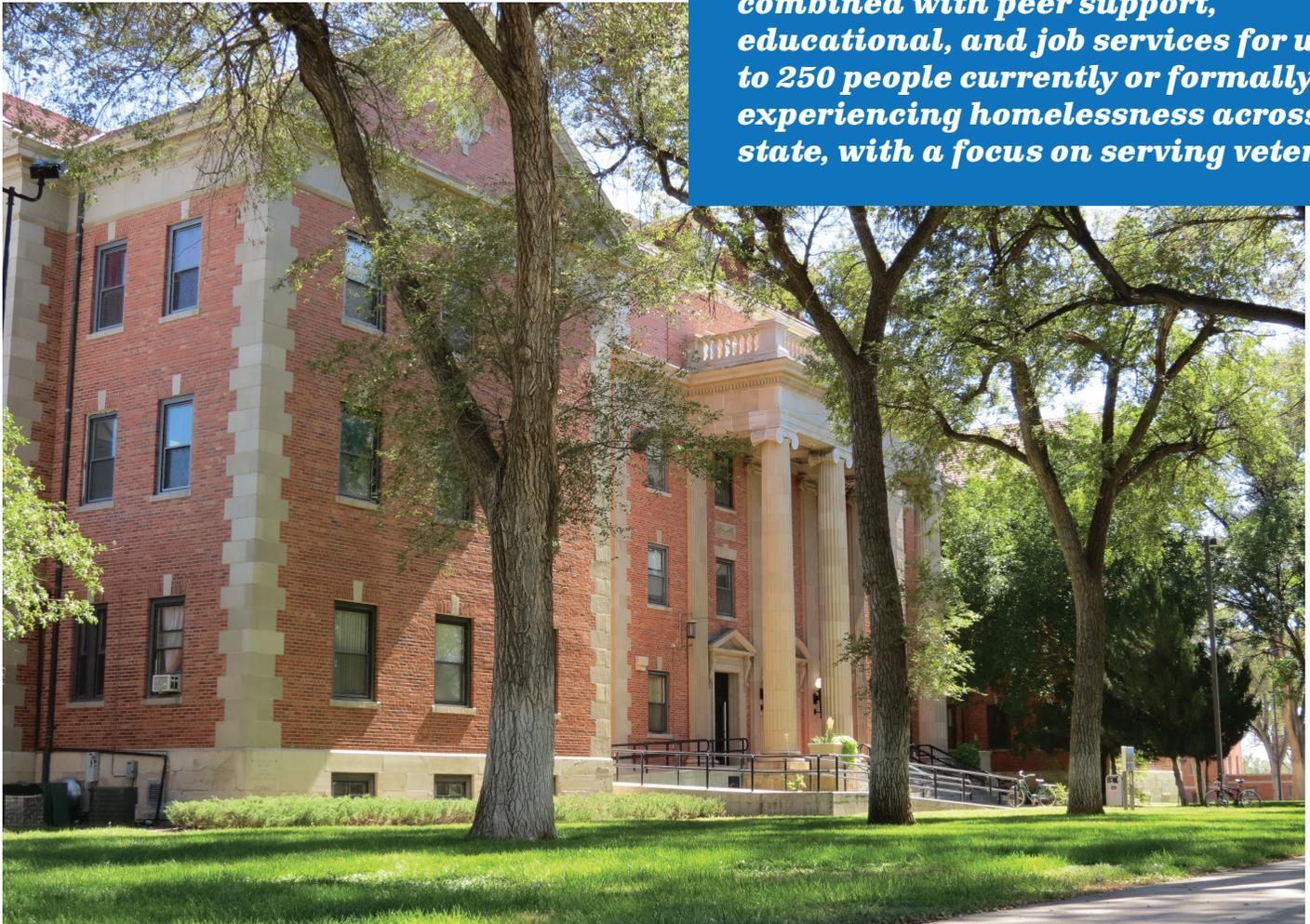
The Fort Lyon Supportive Residential Community Program, located in a former minimum-security prison in rural southeast Colorado, provides recovery-oriented transitional housing to individuals who are homeless and struggling with substance abuse. The program, operated by the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) in partnership with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and Bent County, provides housing combined with peer support, educational, and job services for up to 250 people currently or formally experiencing homelessness across the state, with a focus on serving veterans.

Initially, some state lawmakers expressed skepticism, raising concerns about the program's effectiveness and financial sustainability. A five-year audit of the program ordered by the General Assembly showed mixed results. The evaluation found three-quarters of Fort Lyon residents did not return to the streets or shelters. Nearly half of Fort Lyon residents moved into permanent housing, and 29% left the program to other transitional housing opportunities. Critics argue the evaluation did not examine the clients who failed the program. Only 38% of the nearly 800 clients who left Fort Lyon from 2013-2017 completed the program, which means exiting to permanent housing and meeting their therapy or sobriety goals.

As for the program's economic impacts, the 2017 program evaluation found economic activity at the Fort Lyon Program created 119 jobs and more than \$10 million of financial activity in Colorado in 2015-2016. Some Bent County residents have raised concerns about the program's adverse impacts on the community, however, citing perceived problems like increased crime and substance use but never presenting data to support these claims.

Different opinions on how to end homelessness influence how the program evaluation results are interpreted and used in discussions about the Fort Lyon Program's future. While some state lawmakers and community members have interpreted the audit's results as proof the program needs improvement, some housing advocates believe the results demonstrate the program's success in getting people off the streets, into the recovery process, and stabilized in housing. CCH is committed to continuing the program and enhancing the program experience, outcomes, and community relationships to ensure people experiencing homelessness in Colorado have a safe place to go to recover from their substance-use disorders and get on a path to housing stability.

The program provides housing combined with peer support, educational, and job services for up to 250 people currently or formally experiencing homelessness across the state, with a focus on serving veterans.



Fort Lyon facility

Tenant Screening as a Barrier to Housing

Tenant screening is one of the more harmful connections between the criminal justice system and housing, for federally assisted housing and private market housing.

An extensive study conducted in 1997 by Seattle University's Professor Jacqueline Hafgott found landlords often would reject outright applicants with criminal convictions.

The Obama administration worked to combat this problem in 2015 when HUD released a rule (PIH 2015-19) to ensure PHAs and project owners do not automatically bar people with criminal records from federally subsidized housing. The administration also released a "disparate impact rule," which states that under the Fair Housing Act when a housing provider's screening policy has a disparate impact on a person of a protected class that policy is unlawful, and the applicant is allowed to sue. Outside of HUD's mandatory screening requirements and the disparate impact rule, however, the agency provides vague guidance to PHAs, allowing them wide discretion in approving applicants for subsidized housing. Moreover, when people are approved for a voucher or project-based Section 8 housing assistance, they are at the mercy of private landlords or management companies who often use more stringent and discriminatory background checks.

While PHAs seek to provide housing to those that need it most, they are also evaluated on their ability to lower levels of crime in their housing. Private landlords and management companies will do all they can to protect their investments, even at the expense of those who need housing the most.

Third Party Tenant Screening



One of the reasons private housing providers' background checks are more problematic is because they often use private screening companies. These companies pull potentially incomplete or misleading criminal records, sometimes with outdated information that may not consider that a record has been expunged or sealed from public databases. Screening companies also often mix up people with the same names. These companies then provide a "yes" or "no" answer to the private housing providers, who accept or deny applicants based on that determination. Further, while federal law grants applicants the right to see their background reports, many renters do not know this, and some housing providers will not comply with requests for copies of tenant-screening reports.

Long Lookback Periods

Lookback periods are limits on how far back a landlord can consider criminal history. Some offenses are so old, they do not carry information about the character and conduct of the renter applying for housing. HUD has suggested limits on lookback periods for certain crimes in their properties, but private housing providers often look as far back as 20 years. Often, landlords will not even examine what triggers a denial screening, so they treat something like trespassing or shoplifting the same as a violent crime because they do not bother to research the actual infraction.

Paul Solomon runs Sponsors, Inc., a nonprofit in Oregon dedicated to assisting formerly justice-involved people in their searches. He describes how these



lookback periods ignore research showing that people "desist" from criminal behavior five years after they reenter society.

Sex offenders, Mr. Solomon says, are a group of formerly convicted people least likely to re-offend. He therefore questions the sense in permanently banning anyone from HUD subsidized housing who has ever registered as a sex offender. Sponsors, Inc. aims to combat the racial injustice of long lookback periods, arguing that while 8% of the adult population has a felony conviction, a disproportionate 33% of the Black population carries the stigma.

Tenant Screening for Federally Assisted Housing: Different Screening Standards for Different PHAs

Different PHAs have different screening standards. HUD has its own policies PHAs must follow, but PHAs can add their own screening policies in addition to HUD's. As a result, it can be difficult for a household that receives housing assistance from one PHA to move to an area in another PHA's jurisdiction. Just because a household passes the screening process at the first PHA does not mean they will pass the screening process at the PHA where they are moving.

Exhibit 1

Bans for Drug-Related Activities

Activities	PHA Mentions Ban	No Ban Length Specified (circumstances)	1- to 2-Year Ban (circumstances)	3- to 5-Year Ban (circumstances)	6- to 10-Year Ban (circumstances)	Lifetime Ban (circumstances)
Illegal drug use, abuse, possession, distribution, trafficking	37	22(12)	8(3)	14(8)	2	0
Eviction from public or private housing	34	1	0	30(15)	4(3)	2(1)
Unspecified activity	29	15(3)	2(1)	18(3)	1(1)	0
Manufacturing	9	2	0	6(1)	2	2
Arrest	6	5	1	0	0	0
Conviction	6	3	0	2	1	0
Intent to distribute	5	1	1	3	1	1
Warrant	2	2	0	0	0	0
Pending charges	2	2	0	0	0	0

PHA = public housing authority.

Notes: N = 40 PHAs. Individual PHAs can report multiple ban lengths for an offense or may have different ban lengths for similar offenses. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of PHAs that take individual circumstances into account.

Source: Curtis et al

Exhibit 2

Bans for Alcohol or Nonviolent Criminal Activity

Activities	PHA Mentions Ban	No Ban Length Specified (circumstances)	6-Month Ban	1- to 2-Year Ban (circumstances)	3- to 5-Year Ban (circumstances)	6- to 10-Year Ban (circumstances)	Lifetime Ban (circumstances)
Alcohol use/abuse	37	32(8)	2	5(3)	3(1)	0	1(1)
Eviction from public or private housing	31	15(3)	0	5(1)	13(1)	2	3
Unspecified "activity"/"incidents"	27	20(4)	0	5(1)	6(1)	3	0
Theft, burglary, robbery, shoplifting	14	2	1	3	10(2)	1	1
Criminal arson	13	2(1)	0	0	3	3	6(1)
Conviction (all types)	13	5(1)	0	1	6(2)	5(2)	0
Prostitution, solicitation	7	2	0	2	4(1)	0	0
Parole, parole violation, probation	5	2	0	1	1	1(1)	0
Arrest	4	4		0	0	0	0
Fire related	4	3	0	0	1	0	0
Lewd conduct, disorderly, public drunkenness, harassment, indecent exposure or conduct, mayhem, fighting, resisting arrest	4	1	0	2	2		0
Criminal pattern (various definitions)	4	3	0	0	1	0	0
Warrant	3	3	0	0	0		0
Driving violation (including DWI)	3	1	0	2	1	0	0
Violation protective order	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

DWI = driving while intoxicated. PHA = public housing authority.

Notes: N = 40 PHAs. Individual PHAs can report multiple ban lengths for an offense or may have different ban lengths for similar offenses. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of PHAs that take individual circumstances into account.

Source: Curtis et al

These four graphics detail the activities banned, and the length of the ban, of 40 of the largest PHAs. They come from a 2013 study conducted by Marah A. Curtis from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Sarah Garlington from Boston University, and Lisa S. Schottenfeld from Mathematica Policy Research. These charts demonstrate the variety of standards that different PHAs have, but also the severity of punishment for certain crimes. Read the full study here: <https://bit.ly/2PdzkMJ>

Exhibit 3

Bans for Violent Crimes

Crimes/Activities	PHA Mentions Ban	No Ban Length Specified (circumstances)	1- to 2-Year Ban (circumstances)	3- to 5-Year Ban (circumstances)	6- to 10-Year Ban (circumstances)	Lifetime Ban (circumstances)
Unspecified "activity"	34	16 (2)	3 (1)	18 (6)	5 (1)	1 (1)
Property violence or vandalism	28	18	2	10 (1)	4 (1)	1
Sexual crimes	19	6 (1)	1	9 (1)	3	2
Homicide, murder, manslaughter	17	5 (1)	0	8	4	2
Assault, crime against a person	17	6 (1)	3	10 (2)	3	1
Threats, stalking	15	6	2	9 (1)	0	0
Firearms related, including explosives	12	4 (1)	1	7 (1)	2	0
Sexual crimes against children	9	3 (1)	0	2	1	3 (1)
Domestic violence	9	1 (1)	2	6 (2)	1	0
Abuse/neglect of child, elderly, or disabled person	9	4 (2)	1	5 (1)	0	0
Kidnapping, false imprisonment	7	2	0	2	2	1
Home invasion	4	0	0	4 (1)	0	0
Terrorism	3	1	1	1	0	0
Hate crimes, civil rights violations	3	2	0	1	0	0
Conviction	2	0	0	2	0	0
Gang related, organized crime	2	0	0	2 (1)	0	0
Arrest	1	1	0	0	1	0

PHA = public housing authority.

Notes: N = 40 PHAs. Individual PHAs can report multiple ban lengths for an offense or may have different ban lengths for similar offenses. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of PHAs that take individual circumstances into account.

Source: Curtis et al

Exhibit 4

Bans for Other Reasons

Reasons	PHA Mentions Ban	No Ban Length Specified (circumstances)	6-Month Ban	1- to 2-Year Ban	3- to 5-Year Ban	6- to 10-Year Ban
Neighbor disturbance	23	19 (1)	0	0	4	1
Disorderly house	8	5	0	2	1	0
Incarceration	2	0	1	1	0	0

PHA = public housing authority.

Notes: N = 40 PHAs. Individual PHAs can report multiple ban lengths for an offense or may have different ban lengths for similar offenses. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of PHAs that take individual circumstances into account.

Source: Curtis et al

The Unfair Closed-Mindedness of “One-Strike” Eviction Policies

When Congress passed the “Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988,” they instituted strict lease-enforcement and eviction of renters who benefit from federal housing subsidies if they have been involved in criminal activity. The Act included a requirement that PHAs and private landlords who receive federal housing subsidies evict tenants if they, their household members, or guests engaged in criminal activity on or near federally subsidized housing premises.

The eviction rules created by the Act were later known as “one-strike” policies. These policies were later expanded in 1996 to include language calling on the National Crime Information Center and local police departments to provide criminal conviction records to operators of federally subsidized housing so they could screen applicants, enforce the lease, and evict tenants.

After the expansion of “one-strike” policies in 1996, HUD created regulations for the enforcement of these policies that encouraged operators of federally subsidized housing to use strict screening and eviction procedures. Operators’ funding and ratings were connected to whether they adopted and implemented effective applicant-screening.

The passage of the “Second Chance Act of 2007,” which was designed to improve the reentry process, required HUD to loosen its “one-strike” policies. HUD’s November 2015 guidance states that PHAs and other owners of subsidized properties should not use arrest records as the sole basis for denying admission, ending assistance, or evicting tenants. It also states that HUD does not require PHAs and owners to adopt “one-strike” policies, and owners and PHAs have the obligation to safeguard the due-process rights of applicants and tenants.

Since the release of the 2015 HUD guidance, PHAs and owners have struggled to revise their “one-strike” policies and procedures. Although policy update suggestions have been offered in HUD notices and by national nonprofits, many PHAs and owners are still uncertain on how best to provide “second chances” for returning citizens while maintaining the safety and security of their residents.



“*Since the release of the 2015 HUD guidance, PHAs and owners have struggled to revise their “one strike” policies and procedures.*”

Nuisance Abatement Ordinances: Destabilizing Renters and Making Neighborhoods Unsafe



“Nuisance abatement” can be a misleading term. While its literal definition suggests a local government taking steps to improve neighborhoods by responding to nuisances at properties, in practice the approach often criminalizes marginalized individuals.

These ordinances often punish the victim of a crime, not the perpetrator, because it is the lease-holding renter who is held accountable, even if they are attacked. In most versions of these ordinances, renters are evicted after a certain number of police calls to their address. Many low-income people, therefore, fear contacting the police in dangerous situations, leaving them less likely to be protected. Knowing that the police are unlikely to be called, criminals often feel emboldened, and neighborhoods and renters become less safe. Too often, local governments require landlords to evict victims of domestic abuse if the police are called to an apartment, as the police activity creates a “nuisance” for the community. **In 2015, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) studied the results of two nuisance-abatement ordinances in upstate New York and found that domestic violence calls were by far the most common type of police interactions leading to eviction**, with drugs and theft accounting for less than 10%. These ordinances deny emergency assistance to people who badly need it, and they do not reduce crime.

Nuisance-abatement ordinances also take away a landlord’s opportunity to make their own decisions about what happened and if an eviction is warranted. Landlords could lose their property if they do not proceed with an eviction under such ordinances. Most appalling is that the evictions often proceed even when there are no arrests or convictions. In most cases, the standard for a nuisance is simply calling the police, regardless of whether a crime is investigated or prosecuted.

Several states have taken action to limit such ordinances. In 2015, Illinois passed a law preventing local governments from enacting or enforcing ordinances that punish tenants for calling 911 in response to domestic or sexual violence, or for crimes committed against them, or on behalf of an individual with a disability. Minnesota passed a similar law in 2019.

Nuisance abatement enforcement truck in South Bend, Indiana



The Path Forward: Addressing Obstacles to Housing Upon Reentry

Advocates and leaders with experience returning from incarceration have been working on solutions throughout the country. There have been innovative ideas and successful campaigns to confront many of the harmful policies that prevent returning prisoners from accessing housing. Some examples to consider for your community follows below.

Solutions

1. “Ban the Box” on Rental Applications

Advocates across the U.S. are advocating for “ban the box” ordinances that prohibit private landlords from unfairly denying applicants housing based on their criminal histories. These policies provide a second chance for people who have been arrested or have served sentences. They support successful reentry, reduce recidivism, and families affected by incarceration. Because blanket housing bans disproportionately impact communities of color, “ban the box” ordinances advance racial and economic justice.



Many enacted “ban the box” ordinances allow landlords to consider an applicant’s criminal history only after the landlord has determined that the candidate meets other qualifications. For example, the Detroit City Council voted unanimously to pass the “Fair Chance Housing Ordinance” in February 2019, which bans landlords from asking potential tenants about their criminal background in the initial phases of the application process. Seattle’s “Fair Chance Housing Ordinance,” which went into effect in February 2018, does not allow landlords to consider criminal histories at all. A conservative legal group has filed a lawsuit against Seattle’s ordinance, arguing it violates landlords’ constitutional rights. The [case](#) is currently before the Washington Supreme Court.

Other cities that have passed “ban the box” ordinances include Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA; Newark, NJ; Kansas City, MO; and Washington, DC.



2. Reforming HUD Screening Policies

Much of HUD’s guidance to PHAs and property owners on screening applicants for federally assisted housing is optional. As a result, PHAs and owners often develop their own screening criteria that prevent people with criminal records from accessing federal housing assistance.

It is important for advocates to remember that PHAs are federally funded but locally governed by appointees of mayors or county executives. Direct advocacy to local leaders can ensure PHAs adopt improved screening procedures. New Orleans is a great example. After a three-year process engaging with residents and advocates pushing for change, the Housing Authority of New Orleans established new screening procedures that included a review panel for applicants with prior convictions.

To reduce barriers, HUD should provide specific guidance on reasonable lookback periods, limit the criminal activity providers can use to determine eligibility, and require housing providers to consider the entire circumstances of an applicant’s history. Such changes would increase opportunities for returning citizens to reconnect with their families and communities.

The “Fair Chance at Housing Act of 2019,” introduced by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA), would expand access to stable and affordable housing for people with criminal records. The legislation would require PHAs and owners, when determining an applicant’s eligibility, to consider only felonies that resulted in a conviction and could threaten the health or safety of the owners, employees, or other residents. The bill would require PHAs and housing providers to establish a review panel with at least one resident representative to conduct individualized, comprehensive reviews of an applicant’s criminal history, including any mitigating evidence provided by the applicant. It would also require PHAs and property owners to provide applicants a written notice of their screening policies, and if an applicant is denied admission, provide notice of the reasons for the decision and the options for appeal.

3. Ordinances Restricting Lookback Periods

Access to federal housing assistance for individuals with criminal records is often difficult, but it is made more so when PHAs and property owners use unreasonable lookback periods to review applicants’ criminal histories. Some communities have passed ordinances that restrict lookback periods and require landlords to complete an individualized review considering mitigating evidence provided by the applicant. The Minneapolis City Council passed an ordinance in 2019 limiting landlords from considering misdemeanors older than three years, felonies older than seven years, and certain dangerous offenses for 10 years. While such limits are reasonable, some communities restrict the lookback periods to even shorter periods.

4. Access to Legal Counsel

Right to counsel for renters facing eviction is an idea gaining momentum throughout the U.S. New York City was the first to establish the right to an attorney in eviction proceedings. The Bronx Defenders, one of New York's largest public-defender groups, has shown how better legal representation for low-income renters effectively combats housing insecurity and homelessness. Renters being evicted for criminal misconduct in violation of a lease benefit greatly from having an attorney at their hearings. According to Ryan MacDonald, a staff attorney at The Bronx Defenders, judges will often grant an order of eviction for a crime that has not yet been prosecuted because the eviction gets to court faster than the alleged criminal offense. Having an attorney can often prevent such evictions.



In addition to counsel during eviction trials, many legal-services groups assist people with appeals efforts after an application for public housing or vouchers is denied. In these cases, legal counsel can identify when a PHA has illegally applied screening criteria not allowed by HUD. Mr. MacDonald says its legal counsel services are particularly effective because of their holistic model of working closely with

social workers and non-attorney advocates. This integrated practice helps keep people from falling through the various cracks in the housing process and ensures low-income tenants know their rights before an attorney needs to be involved.

“Cities should make significant investments in providing counsel not just for evictions but also for assisted-housing application disputes and any discrimination or unjust denials tenants may face.

5. Housing First

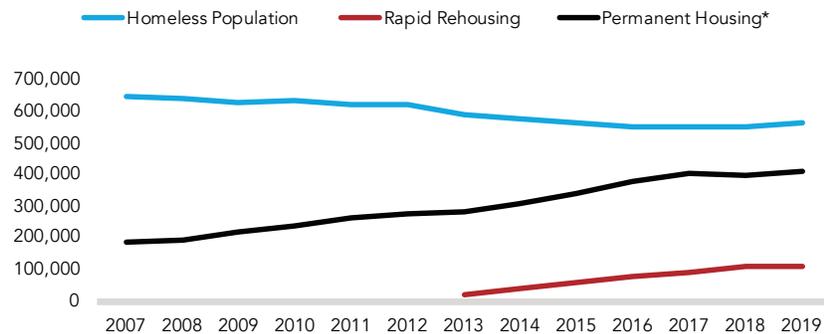
As stated earlier in this *Tenant Talk*, the best way to prevent and end homelessness is providing people with housing. Whether permanent or transitional housing, assisted housing, or private-market housing, it will always be affordable housing, not handcuffs, that reduces homelessness.

While homelessness is perceived to be connected to criminality, homeless individuals are often in fact the victims of crime. The National Coalition for the Homeless documented 1,769 acts of violence against homeless individuals by housed perpetrators nationwide from 1999 to 2017, 467 of which were fatal. And these numbers are likely an undercount, as many people experiencing homelessness do not report crimes perpetrated against them.

“Housing First” policies that invest in homeless prevention and re-housing programs are more cost-

effective than relying on the prisons and emergency services for people experiencing homelessness. When President George W. Bush's administration adopted Housing First policies, it saw chronic homelessness decrease by about 30% from 2005 to 2007. With the expansion of Housing First between 2007 and 2016, those sleeping on the streets or in other areas outside of shelters decreased by 31%. This reduction in people living in public spaces reduces exposure to police interactions, unnecessary fines, jail visits, and convictions under policies criminalizing homelessness.

Homelessness Declined with Expansion of Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Housing "Beds"



*Permanent Housing includes both "Permanent Supportive Housing" and "Other Permanent Housing."
Source: 2019 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress.

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) provides housing and the wrap-around services like community-based health care, treatment, and employment services that people exiting homelessness need. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) found that between 75% and 91% of households remain housed one year after being rapidly re-housed. NAEH also found that PSH can save \$31,545 per person in emergency services and \$23,000 per person in shelters. It is also important to remember: no price can be put on the value of a person being safely, securely housed, especially marginalized individuals leaving the criminal justice system with few supports.

6. Banning One-Strike Policies in Leases

Banning discriminatory eviction policies in subsidized and private housing leases would increase access to affordable homes for people who have had interactions with the criminal justice system. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's "Fair Chance at Housing Act of 2019" would ban "one-strike" eviction policies by requiring PHAs and property owners to consider only criminal activities that could threaten the health and safety of others. The bill would require housing providers to complete an individualized review that considers the total circumstances of the family's situation before deciding to evict. If the PHA or owner decides to evict a tenant due to criminal conduct after completing an individualized review, the household would have the option to remove the member who engaged in criminal activity to stay in the home. The legislation would also eliminate the requirement to include "no-fault" eviction policies in leases.



Spotlight On...

Advocates Win New Protections from Housing Discrimination in Cook County, Illinois

Over 1 million adults in Chicago and its surrounding communities now have fairer access to safe, affordable homes under a recently enacted “Just Housing Amendment.” Under the Cook County ordinance, part of the county’s fair housing law that went to effect on December 31, 2019, landlords can no longer consider arrests or use blanket bans on conviction records; instead, they must consider factors such as how long it has been since the person’s conviction, the type of offense, and ways the person has shown they can be a good tenant.

Having a stable home is critical for people returning to their communities after an arrest or conviction, as well as for their families and the broader community. A safe, affordable home reduces the rate of recidivism and allows families to reunite. Governments spend less on emergency services like homeless shelters, hospitals, and prisons. **And because people of color and people with disabilities are disproportionately more likely to become involved with the justice system, the Just Housing Amendment advances racial and economic justice.**

The Just Housing Initiative – a coalition of over 100 organizations, including NLIHC state partner Housing Action Illinois, and dozens of individuals with lived experience – advocated for this new law for four years. Just Housing Leaders with lived experience were especially important in the campaign’s success through the leadership and advocacy they provided every step of the way. Before the Cook County Board of Commissioners voted on the Just Housing Amendment in April 2019, over 50 Just Housing Leaders showed up to testify at the committee hearing, sharing powerful stories that brought the significance of the law to life.

Troy O’Quin, a veteran and community leader who lives and works in Cook County, was joined by his wife and two daughters at the hearing. He testified about his difficulties accessing housing due to his past record. “It takes only a second to break the law but a lifetime to live with the consequences,” Troy said. “One second, one crime, one serious lack of judgment . . . in America, this can be a life sentence.”

Now that the amendment has gone into effect, the campaign is focusing its efforts on educating the public and stakeholders about the new ordinance and their rights, as well as monitoring compliance and enforcement. People with lived-experience will be crucial to this work, helping to facilitate trainings on the new law.

Kansas City Renters Win First-Ever Tenant Bill of Rights

Renters in Kansas City achieved some big wins in 2019. On December 13, Mayor Quinton Lucas signed the city’s first Tenant Bill of Rights, creating new rights for city renters and listing them with other, previously existing tenant protections. The new Tenant Bill of Rights will be a baseline expectation for all property owners renting property in the city, and obeying this law is required to receive a license to rent. A resolution that passed with the legislation commits the mayor and city council to protect these renters’ rights moving forward.

Under the new law, landlords can no longer deny applicants with criminal or eviction histories when they first apply to rent a home, but landlords may still do background checks later in the approval process. The new law also strengthens the requirement for landlords to notify tenants before entering their homes, requiring at least a 24-hour notice. Renters will also have better knowledge of costs before moving in, as landlords are now required to provide a list of utility companies and an estimate of utility costs. The city’s fair housing ordinances are expanded as well, making gender identity and expression protected classes.

This historic win was led by renters and the grassroots activist group KC Tenants and supported by a coalition that included lawyers, the mayor’s office, and champions on the city council.

KC Tenants began its work in early 2019 shortly after making tenants’ rights a key issue in the Kansas City spring elections and then launching its campaign to win the Tenant Bill of Rights. Because the final Tenant Bill of Rights did not include everything KC Tenants wanted, there is more work to do. For example, the initial proposal included a strong ban on discrimination against voucher holders that was not included in the final ordinance. KC Tenants Executive Director Tara Raghuvver says that, overall, this is good policy done the right way, emphasizing that people directly impacted were involved and leading throughout the process.

KC Tenants at Rally for Tenant Bill of Rights (Photo Credit: Chase Castor)



Source: Just Housing Initiative Supporters Celebrating Passage of Amendment



Federal Spending Updates

Congress and the president finalized on December 20, 2019, the funding levels for fiscal year (FY) 2020, which began on October 1. They passed several temporary spending bills, known as continuing resolutions, to prevent a government shutdown before the final agreement. The final deal provides affordable housing and community development programs with more than \$12 billion above President Trump’s request, which had called for dramatic cuts.

The final FY20 spending bill provides enough funding to renew all existing rental assistance contracts for both vouchers and project-based rental assistance. Congress modestly increased resources for PHAs to make critical repairs to public housing, including new competitive funds to reduce lead-based paint and other health hazards, such as mold and carbon monoxide poisoning. The bill also provides enough funding to build new homes under the Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Section 811) and Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) programs. As in 2019, Congress included \$25 million for a mobility housing voucher demonstration to help families with young children move to areas of opportunity.

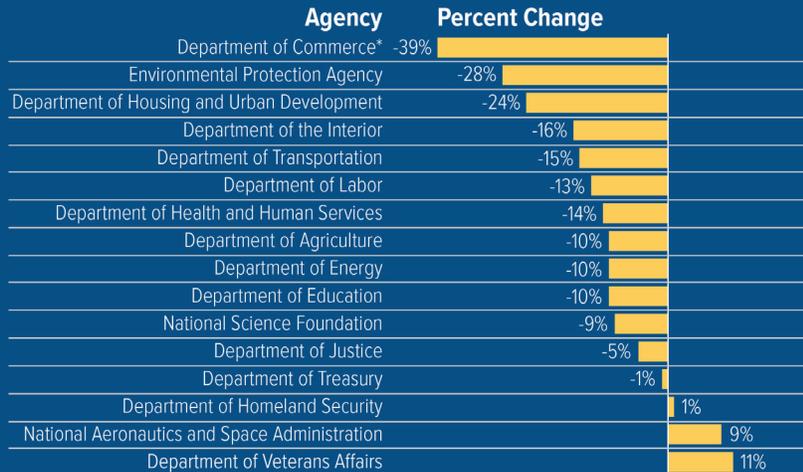
This successful outcome is the result of the hard work of advocates across the country and strong congressional champions, including Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Jack Reed (D-RI) and Representatives David Price (D-NC) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) who lead the subcommittees that oversee funding for HUD.

Congress and the president reached an agreement last summer on overall spending levels for FY21 as well. Under the deal, Congress will have only about \$5 billion more for all non-defense programs than in FY20. Because the cost of housing and development programs are tied to rents and other rates that rise each year, funding needs to increase to ensure no one loses assistance. Costs to renew existing contracts for vouchers and project-based rental assistance alone require an increase of more than \$1 billion each year. Since the money available for many competing priorities is relatively small, advocates need to make sure their members of Congress understand the importance of affordable housing programs and why they require increased funding every year.

The process for FY21 began when the president released his budget request in February. Once again, he proposed cutting or eliminating funding for key programs as well as raising rents for people living in subsidized housing. The president’s budget is only a recommendation to Congress; under this administration, Congress has largely chosen to ignore his requests. Stay up to date on the budget process by checking out NLIHC’s federal budget page at: <https://nlihc.org/federal-budget-and-spending>. NLIHC encourages advocates to oppose cuts and advocate for increased resources during the *Our Homes, Our Voices* National Housing Week of Action, May 2–12.

President’s 2021 Budget Would Cut Broad Set of Public Services

Proposed fiscal year 2021 discretionary funding for various domestic agencies relative to fiscal year 2020 level (with inflation adjustment)



*A large part of the decrease in Commerce Department funding reflects reduced needs for the Census Bureau after completion of the 2020 decennial census.

Source: Office of Management and Budget

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New Bills Aim to Improve and Expand Public Housing

The last issue of *Tenant Talk* described how years of federal disinvestment in public housing has decreased the quantity and quality of the public housing stock. Several members of Congress have recognized the important role public housing plays in addressing the affordable housing crisis. Four bold new bills would improve living conditions for public housing residents and increase the supply of accessible, affordable, and decent homes.

Representative Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) and 13 other Democrats introduced the “Public Housing Emergency Response Act” (H.R. 4546) on September 27, 2019. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and four other senators introduced an identical bill (S. 3212) in the Senate on January 16, 2020. The bill would provide an additional \$70 billion for HUD’s Public Housing Capital Fund, allowing PHAs to repair and renovate homes. Approximately \$32 billion of this funding would be reserved for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the nation’s largest PHA. In the spring of 2018, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo (D) declared NYCHA was in a “state of emergency” due to the severely deteriorating conditions of its properties.



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Senator Bernie Sanders, Diane Yentel at a press conference calling for a major investment in public housing infrastructure.

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) introduced the “Green New Deal for Public Housing Act” (S.2876/H.R. 5185) on November 14, 2019.

This bill would create new HUD grant programs to renovate and upgrade public housing to decrease health hazards and improve energy-efficiency. The bill would move public housing toward renewable energy sources and provide job opportunities and workforce development, including through improvements to HUD’s Section 3 obligation to hire public housing and other low-income residents.

Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN) introduced the “Homes for All Act” (H.R. 5244) on December 5, 2019, which would invest \$1 trillion to create 8.5 million new public housing apartments. An additional 2.5 million deeply affordable rental homes would be built through the national Housing Trust Fund, which funds the construction and rehabilitation of homes for the lowest-income households. The bill would also repeal the Faircloth Amendment, which currently bans the creation of new public housing stock, and would provide full, consistent funding for public housing in the future. The bill would also bar PHAs from “repositioning” the public housing stock. Repositioning entails demolishing, selling, or converting the housing to project-based rental assistance. Representative Omar’s plan would not allow public housing agencies to deny housing to someone based on their criminal history or immigration status and would create a new program to help local governments combat gentrification and neighborhood destabilization.

Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced the “Averting Crises in Housing Assistance Act” (S.3088) on December 18, 2019. The bill would require HUD and PHAs to create a plan of action to address poor living conditions in public housing. Congress would invest \$70 billion in the Public Housing Capital Fund to help HUD make needed repairs. Additionally, public housing residents would be able to request HUD step in if buildings pass inspection even though conditions are unsatisfactory. Residents would be allowed to bring a private “right of action,” or a lawsuit, against the federal government if building conditions are not improved within a year after a PHA’s revitalization plan of action is finalized. This is something that was specified in the last *Tenant Talk* as a necessary improvement for public housing residents.

The “Eviction Crisis Act” Promises New Resources and Better Data



Senator Michael Bennet speaking at an Opportunity Starts At Home Campaign Capitol Hill briefing.

Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Rob Portman (R-OH), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Todd Young (R-IN), introduced on December 12, 2019 the “Eviction Crisis Act” (S.3030), which creates new tools to help end the nation’s eviction epidemic. Among various other promising provisions, the legislation includes the creation of an Emergency Assistance Fund to help low-income households facing housing instability due to an unexpected economic shock. This policy solution was developed and championed by NLIHC’s *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign, which worked closely with the bill’s sponsors.

This bipartisan bill would create a program to fund state and local governments to expand the use of landlord-tenant community courts and increase the presence of social services representatives for tenants. These funds will promote and enable mediation and help both tenants and landlords avoid the high costs of eviction. The bill also creates a national database to standardize data and track evictions to help policymakers design programs to better serve people needing assistance. The bill would give tenants the opportunity to contest and correct inaccurate or incomplete information on tenant screening reports and would require that, when a court rules in favor of a tenant in an eviction proceeding, those judgments and eviction filings be removed from tenant screening reports.

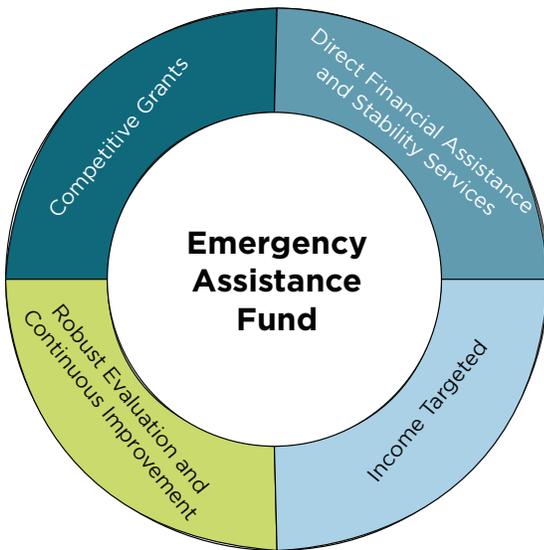
The Emergency Assistance Fund would provide direct financial assistance and stability services to help people remain stably housed during an unforeseen economic shock. Most families in poverty who rent spend at least half of their incomes on housing, leaving virtually no margin for an unexpected expense. A broken-down car, unreimbursed medical bill, or temporary decline of income can send a household down the spiral of housing

instability, eviction, and homelessness. At least three-fourths of the dollars must be used to provide direct financial assistance and up to one-fourth can be used for wrap-around services, such as counseling.

The “Eviction Crisis Act” is an historic effort to tackle the devastating impacts of evictions on individuals and families and provide cost-effective eviction prevention options. The *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign has called on Congress to quickly enact this bipartisan bill and encourages advocates to send letters to your federal elected officials urging them to support it:

<https://www.opportunityhome.org/take-action/>

Most families in poverty who rent spend at least half of their incomes on housing, leaving no margin for an unexpected expense. Broken-down cars, unreimbursed medical bills, or temporary declines of income can quickly send vulnerable households down the disastrous spiral of housing instability, eviction, and homelessness. An Emergency Assistance Fund would offer short-term support to keep families in crisis stably housed.



- State and local governments apply for federal funds to implement creative emergency assistance programs
- Funds must be used to provide direct financial assistance and stability services to households experiencing a crisis which threatens their housing stability.
- Funds are targeted to those most at-risk: extremely low income households
- The program's effectiveness in preventing housing stability is rigorously evaluated and best practices are scaled



Source: Opportunity Starts At Home Campaign

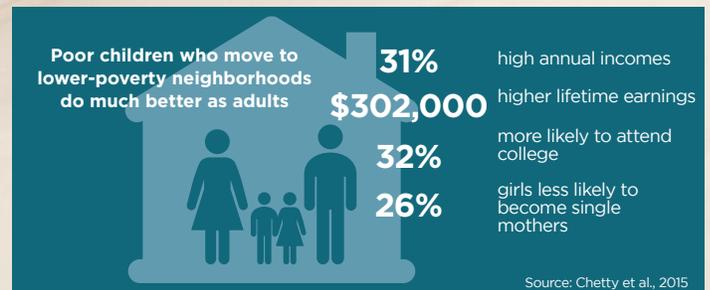
Democrats and Republicans Work Together to Introduce “Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act”

Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Todd Young (R-IN) introduced the “Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act” (S.3083) on December 18, 2019. The bill would create an additional 500,000 housing vouchers for low-income families with young children to help them access neighborhoods of opportunity with high-performing schools, strong job prospects, and other resources. The bill could largely eliminate homelessness among families with young children and substantially reduce the number of children growing up in areas of concentrated poverty. This policy solution has also been championed by NLIHC’s *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign, which worked with the bill’s sponsors on the legislation.

The bill prioritizes these new vouchers for low-income pregnant women and families with children under age 6 who have a recent history of homelessness or housing instability or live in areas of concentrated poverty or who are at risk of being displaced from an opportunity area. The vouchers, which would be coupled with counseling and services to support parents, would be phased in over five years at 100,000 per year.

Research shows that when children in low-income families grow up in neighborhoods with low poverty, quality schools, and low crime, they are significantly more likely to attend college and earn dramatically more as adults over their lifetimes - breaking cycles of generational poverty and producing a positive taxpayer return. Research also shows low-income students perform better academically and close achievement gaps faster when housing assistance enables them to live stably in opportunity neighborhoods with lower-poverty schools.

This bill is another significant bipartisan effort that, if enacted, would dramatically improve the life trajectories of low-income children. The *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign has called on Congress to quickly enact the legislation and urges advocates to send letters to your federal elected officials urging them to support it: <https://www.opportunityhome.org/take-action/>



Source: Chetty et al., 2015

UPDATE: Disaster Recovery & Affordable Housing

More than two years after Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, thousands are still forced to live in damaged houses under blue-tarp roofs due to delays in federal funding and a complex aid application process that has prevented many disaster survivors from receiving assistance. The situation has been further complicated by deadly earthquakes that rocked the island in January, forcing thousands of people in the south of the island to flee their damaged homes and sleep in cars or parks to avoid injury from falling rubble. While emergency services from FEMA and the territorial government have been activated, it is still unclear how long the earthquake recovery will take.

As FEMA's efforts in Puerto Rico ramp up again, HUD relented to increasing pressure from grassroots organizations and congressional leaders and withdrew its hold on hurricane relief and mitigation funding approved by Congress nearly two years ago. HUD did, however, place burdensome restrictions that must be met before the funds are used. The restrictions require the territorial government to make substantial changes to local property laws, pay recovery construction workers below \$15 an hour, and submit recovery plans to a federal financial oversight board. The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) and its Puerto Rico Working Group will continue to monitor the situation and work to ensure the funds are released without further delays and low-income disaster survivors are able to recover.

The DHRC also advocates in Congress for a recovery system that responds quickly to disasters and ensures low-income renters

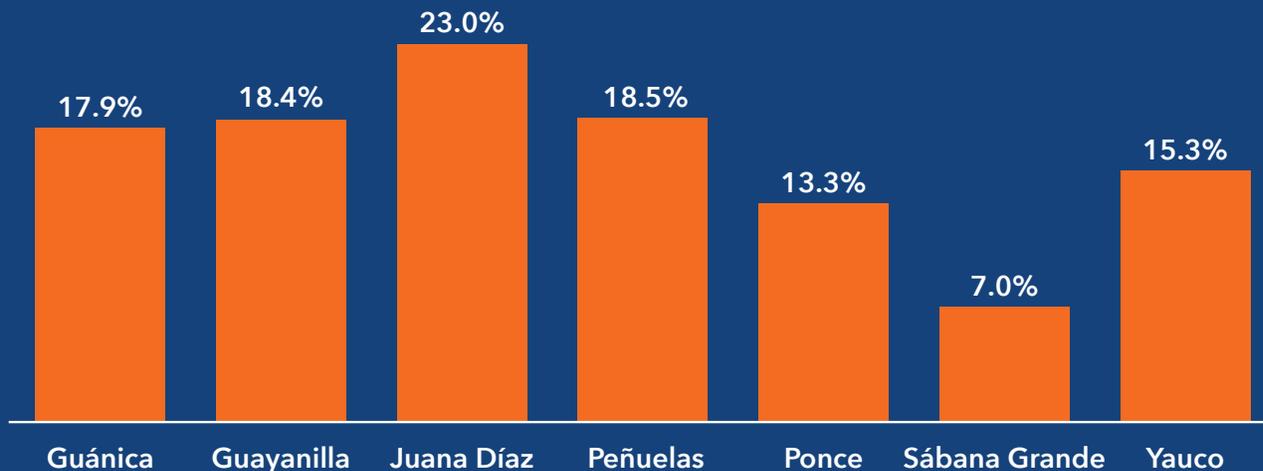


Blue Tarps Still Cover Buildings in San Juan Metropolitan Area.

receive the assistance they need. One of those measures, the "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act," was passed by the House of Representatives in a bipartisan vote last fall. Introduced by Representatives Al Green (D-TX) and Ann Wagner (R-MO), the bill permanently authorizes the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program and incorporates most of the DHRC's recommendations to improve the program.

Administered by HUD, CDBG-DR provides states and communities with flexible, long-term recovery resources to rebuild affordable housing and infrastructure after a disaster. By authorizing the program, the bill would help ensure consistently run recovery programs and ensure that dollars can flow more quickly to communities. The bill also establishes important safeguards and tools to ensure federal recovery efforts reach all impacted households, including those with the lowest-incomes who often suffer the most from disasters and have the fewest resources to recover afterward.

Percent of Occupied Housing Units Damaged or Destroyed by Hurricane María



Source: FEMA Individual Assistance Data for Hurricane María; US Census Bureau & CNE Analysis

Source: Center for a New Economy. Visit them at: <https://grupocne.org/>.

Tell your legislators to vote yes on these important bills!



“ *The denial of basic necessities to formerly incarcerated people does not make our communities safer. Denying housing to those that have been formerly incarcerated increases recidivism.*

Representative
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez



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