

Leading National Organizations in Housing, Health, Education, Civil Rights and More Release Plan to Tackle America's Affordable Housing Crisis

Washington, DC – Today, leading national organizations from the housing, education, health, civil rights, anti-hunger, anti-poverty, and faith-based sectors released a new report which calls for an ambitious federal response to the nation's housing affordability crisis.

Over the past year, these organizations have joined together through [Opportunity Starts at Home](#), an unprecedented multi-sector campaign to advocate for more robust and equitable federal housing policies. The report, entitled "*Within Reach*," argues that stronger federal action is long-overdue to ensure that the most vulnerable low-income households can afford safe, decent rental homes. The report identifies three long-term policy strategies that are essential for Congress to act upon:

- Dramatically expanding rental assistance, such as housing vouchers or renters' tax credits, to bridge the growing gap between rent and income;
- Dramatically expanding the supply of housing affordable to the lowest-income renters, which requires larger investments in production programs like the national Housing Trust Fund; and
- Creating a new national program that provides temporary financial assistance to help cover rent for households experiencing unexpected economic shocks (e.g., loss of work hours, unreimbursed medical bill, broken car). Coupled with stability services, such as counselors and legal aid, this program would extend an emergency cushion to families in crisis, helping them avert the downward spiral of housing instability and homelessness.

The report also identifies short-term priorities that Congress should act upon immediately, such as creating 500,000 "Opportunity Vouchers" designed for families with young children to expand their access to high-opportunity neighborhoods and increasing annual funding for the national Housing Trust Fund to \$3.5 billion.

The report also showcases research demonstrating that housing is a critical driver of outcomes in many other areas of life: education, health, civil rights, food security, poverty reduction, and more. Stakeholders from these different sectors are increasingly recognizing the importance of affordable housing to their own priorities and goals, and through the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign, powerful new partners are working shoulder-to-shoulder to broaden the housing movement.

The campaign is advised by a Steering Committee including: Catholic Charities USA, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Children's Defense Fund, Children's HealthWatch, Community Catalyst, Food Research & Action Center, NAACP, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Social Workers, National League of Cities, National Education Association, National Low Income Housing Coalition, and UnidosUS.

"This report outlines a broad set of federal policies necessary to solve the housing affordability crisis facing America's poorest individuals and families," said Mike Koprowski, national campaign director of *Opportunity Starts at Home*. "While states and localities have important roles to play, they cannot solve this problem without stronger action from the federal government."

"We have the resources to invest in proven solutions," said Diane Yentel, president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition. "What is missing is the political will to fund them at scale."

“Many of the young patients I see in my pediatric clinic need a prescription that’s hard to fill: a safe, stable home that their family can afford,” said Megan Sandel, MD, MPH, Co-Lead Principal Investigator for Children’s HealthWatch. “Health care providers and researchers know that homes are prescriptions for good health. We enthusiastically support the policy proposals outlined in this agenda because they fill the prescription for good homes that children and their families need to become and stay healthy.”

“Providing remedy to the deep resource disparities we experience in our schools along racial lines is a priority for educators because we have a unique understanding of the impact housing policy has on our schools,” said Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association.

“The need is great for so many,” said Derrick Johnson, president and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). “We must continue to push, on all fronts, for safe, decent, affordable housing for all.”

“Access to a safe and decent home is a moral imperative for promoting long-term family stability and economic opportunity,” said Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA. “And our country has the resources to ensure that every family has a home. Catholic Charities USA and the Catholic Charities ministry has made affordable housing for low-income and vulnerable populations a priority.”

“Affordable housing is both the cause of homelessness, and its solution. People become homeless because they can’t afford a place to live, and their homelessness ends when they get back into a home,” said Nan Roman, president and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. “*Opportunity Starts at Home’s* policy agenda is what it will take to solve the problem of housing affordability in our nation – and to end homelessness.”

“Research shows the combination of housing subsidies with nutrition benefits improves economic security,” said Jim Weill, president of the Food Research & Action Center. “Congress must act now to ensure that the millions of people struggling against hunger and poverty in this country have access to resources that meet the most basic of their needs – food and shelter – as well as equitable opportunities to thrive.”

“These policies are critically important,” said Barbara Sard, Vice President of Housing Policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. “Rigorous research shows that they will reduce poverty and homelessness, and help more low-income children to grow up to be healthy, successful adults.”

Today, the campaign is hosting a congressional briefing about the plan at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center at 1pm ET. Follow the campaign on Twitter [@OppStartsatHome](https://twitter.com/OppStartsatHome) to view a livestream of the event. See here for more event information including speakers and panelists: <https://bit.ly/2AwSsOo>

To read the “Within Reach” report, please visit: <https://www.opportunityhome.org/resources/withinreach/>