

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT ACT OF 2021

Transformative legislation to authorize much-needed funding for crucial housing infrastructure while reducing homelessness across America was introduced in June of 2021 by Representatives Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Grace Meng (D-NY). The bill, H.R. 3772: the Housing is a Human Right Act of 2021, would invest more than \$200 billion in necessary affordable housing and support services. Additionally, the bill puts forward \$27 billion a year for homelessness services, provides \$100 million a year for community-driven alternatives to the criminalization of those experiencing homelessness, and makes targeted investments in communities at disproportionate risk of homelessness.

There is no better time for Congress to exercise a sense of urgency in addressing this dire issue than now as America continues to face an even greater housing crisis since the onset of the pandemic and the dramatic rising costs in housing. The Housing is a Human Right Act will address this cruel and inequitable reality by:

- Investing up to \$100 billion for McKinney-Vento Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and \$100 billion for Continuum of Care (CoC) grants.
- Creating a new grant program to invest in humane infrastructure; providing municipalities with \$6 billion a year through a flexible program that will allow them to address their most urgent infrastructure needs related to housing and homelessness.
- Incentivizing local investments in humane, evidence-based models to support people experiencing homelessness, including alternatives to criminalization and penalization.
- Repealing the Faircloth Amendment that would remove the barrier to create new public housing.
- Providing \$10 billion for FEMA emergency food and shelter grants while improving grants to better reflect high rates of homelessness and income inequality.
- Authorizing \$100 million in grants to public libraries to provide assistance and tailored support to persons experiencing homelessness.

Housing is a human right, and everybody in our country deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Housing instability and homelessness are debilitating and demeaning which is why the Housing is a Human Right Act makes long overdue, monumental investments in housing infrastructure and homelessness services. This gives communities the resources they need to guarantee access to affordable housing, as well as the tools needed to tackle homelessness while upholding the dignity of each person.

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People across America faced a crisis of housing instability long before COVID-19 pushed millions of additional families into poverty. As the public health and economic crisis continue, HUD reported that for the first time, there were more unsheltered homeless individuals than those with a form of shelter. Rates of unsheltered homelessness have increased over the last few years, and more than 500,000 people (including more than 100,000 children) were experiencing homelessness before the pandemic. One in four renters was also spending half of their monthly income on rent, and nearly a million tenants were evicted each year. Additionally, someone earning the minimum wage cannot afford safe and healthy housing for their family anywhere in the country.

Lacking housing often leads to penalization, interactions with law enforcement, and entering the justice system. It also makes it difficult to seek or hold a job, obtain assistance with accessing resources, find safe housing, and receive regular care for health needs. In fact, the harsh conditions of unsheltered homelessness lead to a mortality rate that is four to nine times higher than that of the general public. Additionally, some groups are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness — including BIPOC communities, LGBTQAI+, people with disabilities, seniors, veterans, former foster youth, and justice system-involved people. It is time to make our communities accessible for all.

Cosponsors:

Rep. Meng, Grace [D-NY-6], Rep. Pressley, Ayanna [D-MA-7], Rep. Grijalva, Raúl M. [D-AZ-3], Rep. Chu, Judy [D-CA-27], Rep. Omar, Ilhan [D-MN-5], Rep. Bowman, Jamaal [D-NY-16], Rep. McGovern, James P. [D-MA-2], Rep. Schakowsky, Janice D. [D-IL-9], Del. Norton, Eleanor Holmes [D-DC-At Large], Rep. Blumenauer, Earl [D-OR-3], Rep. Bush, Cori [D-MO-1], Rep. Garcia, Jesus G. "Chuy" [D-IL-4], Rep. Torres, Ritchie [D-NY-15], Rep. Tlaib, Rashida [D-MI-13], Rep. Lee, Barbara [D-CA-13], Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria [D-NY-14], Rep. Hayes, Jahana [D-CT-5], Rep. Jones, Mondaire [D-NY-17], Rep. Kahele, Kaiiali'i [D-HI-2]

About National Coalition for the Homeless

The National Coalition for the Homeless is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers, and others committed to a single mission: To end and prevent homelessness while ensuring the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness are met and their civil rights are respected and protected.

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