

TARGETED HOUSING INVESTMENTS ARE FOUNDATIONAL TO “BUILD BACK BETTER”

The Build Back Better Act is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to end homelessness in America, repair public housing, and pave path to universal rental assistance for everyone in need. The HoUsed campaign's [top priorities](#) – rental assistance, public housing, and the national Housing Trust Fund – are not only essential to ensuring that America's lowest-income and most marginalized people have a stable, affordable home, but they serve as the foundation for any strategy to improve health, advance racial equity, address climate change, and strengthen the care economy.

Housing is Healthcare

Affordable homes are necessary for individual and public health, particularly for children:

- Renters who pay more than half of their limited incomes on rent are [23 percent more likely](#) to face food insecurity. Children in families experiencing food and housing insecurity are more likely to experience [poor health outcomes](#), including developmental delays, behavioral problems, and chronic health conditions.
- [Children who experienced prenatal homelessness](#) are 20% more likely to have been hospitalized since birth, and families living in unaffordable homes [spend one-fifth as much on necessary healthcare](#) compared to those in affordable housing.
- Children's HealthWatch estimates that the U.S. will [spend \\$111 billion over the next ten years in avoidable healthcare costs](#) because of housing instability.
- When people have access to [quality affordable housing](#), primary care visits increase by 20%, ER visits decrease by 18%, and total Medicaid expenditures decrease by 12%.
- [Children living in subsidized housing](#) are more likely to be food secure, less likely to be seriously underweight, and more likely to be classified as “well” on an indicator of child health than children on the waitlist for subsidized housing.

Housing is Racial Equity

Housing investments are central to racial equity:

- [Decades of structural racism in housing](#) have left Black, Latino, and Indigenous people [disproportionately likely](#) to live in disinvested neighborhoods, to [experience](#) homelessness and housing insecurity.
- Because of decades of chronic underfunding by Congress, [over 2 million public housing residents](#) – the majority of whom are people of color – are routinely exposed to hazardous and unhealthy living conditions, including [lead](#), [carbon monoxide](#), [mold](#), [asbestos](#), [radon](#), and [pest infestations](#).
- Quality, affordable homes located in economically diverse neighborhoods can help [reduce residential segregation](#) and concentrations of poverty, and [improve access](#) to high-quality education and opportunities for wealth building.

Housing is Environmental Justice

Affordable housing is necessary to meaningfully address climate change:

- The lack of affordable housing in areas close to public transit and job centers forces people with low incomes to live farther away, [increasing both reliance on vehicles and carbon emissions](#).
- Building more affordable housing to achieve higher population density in areas near mass transit centers can help [cut down on reliance on private vehicles](#), reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality. Similarly, housing vouchers can help households with low incomes afford existing homes closer to job centers and mass transit, cutting down on the need for personal vehicles.
- Households with the lowest incomes [typically live in homes with poor ventilation and inefficient appliances](#), increasing the cost of energy for these families as well as indoor and outdoor air pollution.
- Energy efficient upgrades to affordable housing stock not only decrease home energy costs for low-income renters and make affordable housing less expensive to operate, but could account for a [reduction of up to 550 million metric tons](#) of carbon dioxide emissions annually by 2050.

Housing is the Care Economy:

Stable, affordable homes strengthen investments in the care economy:

- The expanded Child Tax Credit and childcare investments proposed in the “Build Back Better Act” are aimed at increasing family security, particularly for children. Without an affordable home, however, these investments will be less effective. Children raised in low-income families who have access to affordable housing [change schools and childcare providers less frequently](#) than children living in unaffordable homes, [perform better on cognitive development tests](#), are more likely to [graduate](#), and [earn more as adults](#).
- The expanded access to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) proposed in the “Build Back Better Act” would help people with disabilities live in community and older adults age in place, but only if they can afford rent. [Housing vouchers would ensure people with disabilities and older adults are able to live in communities of their choosing](#), receive the support they need, and avoid institutionalization.

For more information, contact NLIHC Vice President of Public Policy Sarah Saadian at ssaadian@nlihc.org.