

The Homes for All Act
Sponsored by Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN-05)

Housing is a human right. Every American deserves access to a safe and stable place to live, but unfortunately, our current free-market housing system is not meeting the needs of working families. This year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition found that no state or major metropolitan area in the entire nation has an adequate supply of rental housing for its poorest renters. As a result, 71% of extremely low-income renters are severely housing cost-burdened, spending more than half of their limited incomes on housing.¹ That means these families have little, if any, money remaining for other basics after paying their rent – necessities like groceries, heating, tuition or even gas to get to work.

And the affordable housing gap is only growing wider. Due to the high cost of development and extreme inequality, the private market fails to address the shortage and continues to cater to higher-income renters. In 2017, the median rent in 2017 for a new apartment in a multifamily building was \$1,550 - far higher than what low-wage workers or disadvantaged Americans can afford.² And as the average cost of a home in the United States continues to increase, so does the number of homeless Americans forced to live on the street. Last year, a total of 552,830 people were experiencing homelessness on any given night.³

Meanwhile, the federal government has not made a large-scale investment in affordable housing since the New Deal. The construction of new public housing has been banned since the 1990s – forcing more than 1.6 million families onto a near-endless waitlist for public housing and another 2.8 million families onto the waitlist for vouchers. The private market alone will never be able to provide enough adequate housing for every American. Fulfilling Americans' basic right to housing will only happen with a guaranteed public option and a massive investment in new public, affordable housing construction.

Legislative Summary – The Homes for All Act

This legislation will fulfill the promise of a homes guarantee by building 12 million new public housing and private, permanently affordable rental units - vastly expanding the available affordable housing stock, driving down costs throughout the market and creating a new vision of what public housing looks like in the U.S.

The Homes for All Act invests a total of \$1 trillion into our nation's affordable housing market with the goal of creating 12 million new units over 10 years. Importantly, the bill makes public housing operating and capital expenses mandatory spending in order to prevent future investment bias. Making this spending mandatory ensures that the funding needs of all current and future public housing are fully met and cannot be cut in the event of a budget crisis or a change in Administration. This simple change in budgetary structure makes a homes guarantee real – ensuring the federal government is committed to this program the same way it is to Social Security and Medicare.

The Homes for All Act repeals the Faircloth amendment, allowing the federal government to begin reinvesting in new public housing for the first time since 1990s. The bill would make a historic investment of \$800 billion over the course of 10 years with the goal of building 8.5 million new units of public housing. The bill would also invest an additional \$200 billion in the Housing Trust Fund to help local communities build 3.5 million new private, permanent affordable housing projects for low and extremely-low income families.

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition, [2019](#)

² Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard, [2018](#)

³ National Alliance to End Homelessness, [2018](#)

The bill also establishes a new vision of how 21st Century public and affordable housing should look and operate, specifying that all new housing built with these funds must –

- Remain permanently affordable;
- Be integrated, to the best possible extent with public transit and vehicle alternatives like walking and biking, while allowing for flexibility to accommodate the needs and resources of rural, metropolitan and Tribal areas;
- Be designed, built and operated to the highest possible environmental standard, with a focus on minimizing energy costs and achieving carbon neutrality;
- Prohibit any discrimination against residents based on sexual orientation, gender, criminal history or immigration status;
- Be located in communities that are in compliance with the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule in order to ensure fair and equal access;
- And provide residents with free, voluntary wrap-around services that help address the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness or housing instability – like access to healthcare, employment or education assistance, childcare, financial literacy class and other community-based support services.

The bill also creates a new Community Control and Anti-Displacement Fund within HUD. This Fund is appropriated \$200 billion over 10 years for the purpose of intervening to protect families from gentrification, prevent displacement and stabilize neighborhoods. The Fund will give grants to local governments who design programs that serve this goal – programs that help re-house displaced people, regulate exploitative developers or provide communities with the resources necessary to make a tenants' right of first refusal an affordable and realistic option.

Fully realized, this proposal will guarantee safe, accessible, sustainable, and permanently-affordable homes for all, create a true public option and affirm housing as a basic human right for every American.