

## **Advocacy Tactics & Talking Points to use with Elected Officials and Their Staff**

During times of uncertainty, it is important to build and maintain relationships with elected officials who can help advocate for solutions in government and assist if problems should arise. Below are some key messages and talking points you can use to guide that outreach.

- **Frame the urgency of the challenge:**

- **Key Message:** Housing costs and affordability are a primary source of economic anxiety for most Americans and are among the most urgent domestic economic challenges of the next four years. More than any time in recent history, failure to address the rising cost of housing and housing affordability will be felt viscerally by households throughout the entire country.
  - The Joint Center for Housing Studies found that the home sale price to income ratio is at an all-time high and about half of all renters are cost burdened.<sup>i</sup>
  - Once viewed as a “big city” problem, housing cost pressures are now keenly felt by millions of Americans, in cities, suburbs and rural communities in every state and territory.<sup>ii</sup> A June 2024 US Treasury Department analysis found that more than 90 percent of Americans live in counties where median rents and house prices grew faster than median incomes from 2000 to 2020.<sup>iii</sup> For most households, that means less money for food, medicine, childcare and other essentials.
  - There is a relatively broad recognition among policymakers that an insufficient supply of housing is a major factor keeping prices high, especially for housing stock that is affordable to households in the lower half of the income spectrum. In 2024, housing costs made up more than two thirds of overall inflation.<sup>iv</sup>
  - CEOs and mayors are raising alarm bells that local and regional economic growth are being constrained by a lack of housing supply overall and insufficient affordable housing in particular.
  - The cost of building and operating housing has increased dramatically. The availability of labor, insurance premiums, the cost of materials and land values have all driven cost increases in rental and for sale housing.<sup>v</sup> Federal, state and local regulations, as well as local housing court rules related to eviction, are also significant drivers of cost, both in terms of direct implementation and timing delays.<sup>vi</sup>

- **Establish Your Expertise and Your Impact in the Member’s District or State:**
  - Key Message (please personalize): My organization works every day on the nuts and bolts of [producing, preserving, financing and operating] housing.
    - Highlight the number of people you serve, the number of units you build or manage, how you met emergency needs during COVID.
    - Include specific examples of the work you do with the specific programs and resources for which you are advocating (i.e. LIHTC, NMTC, HOME, CDBG, CDFI Fund Program etc.)
  
- **Be Clear About Your Ask:**
  - Key Message: Congress should pass legislation that supports the development, rehabilitation, preservation, and operation of affordable housing in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the United States. Do not allow these programs to face steep cuts in Congress or elimination by the Administration. HPN’s current legislative asks are:
    - Expand and strengthen the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). Since its inception in 1986, LIHTC has financed the development of 3.8 million affordable rental homes.
    - Make the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) permanent. The NMTC program incentivizes economic and community development in underserved areas, including financing for affordable homeownership.
    - Pass the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act to help finance the development and rehabilitation of single-family homes.
    - Protect funding for the CDFI Fund and its critical programs. CDFIs finance hundreds of thousands of affordable housing units every year.
    - Provide the Secretaries of HUD, USDA and Treasury with statutory authority to waive certain regulatory requirements for programs that support the production, preservation and operation of affordable housing and to streamline reporting requirements in affordable housing deals that layer multiple sources of federal funding.
    - Require the Federal Home Loan Banks to invest more in affordable housing (which would not be a cost the American taxpayer).
    - Maintain the resources made available through the HOME Investment Partnerships Program and the Community Development Block Grant. These programs provide critical resources directly to local communities to address

their housing challenges. If you are interested in ideas about how to make these resources even more effective, we would be happy to offer our ideas.

- **Make an Invitation to Engage in their District or State:**
  - **Key Message:** We are benefiting your constituents and we would like to show you how. Ideally, you should provide a specific written invitation for a specific event and date. The event should be press released or include a media opportunity.
    - One of the best ways to highlight the work your organization is doing and build support for expanded resources for affordable housing is to invite elected officials to see your properties.
    - Engaging elected officials and their staff is a great way to show the impact programs have locally. You can do this through invitations to events you are already planning, such as groundbreakings and anniversaries, or by planning an individual property tour with the office.
  
- **Make Sure Staff Know That You Are Available to Answer Their Questions:**
  - **Key Message:** Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions about housing, housing affordability and community development at [provide contact information].

If HPN can help you with this outreach or you receive questions from elected officials you would like help answering, please contact the HPN Policy team at [policy@housingpartnership.net](mailto:policy@housingpartnership.net)

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/state-nations-housing-2024>

<https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/home-price-income-ratio-reaches-record-high-0>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-home-price-to-income-ratio-by-state/>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://home.treasury.gov/news/featured-stories/rent-house-prices-and-demographics>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2024/despite-cooling-prices-for-new-leases-overall-housing-inflation-could-remain-elevated-into-2025>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.nahb.org/blog/2024/07/how-soaring-prices-building-materials-impact-housing>

<https://www.nahb.org/blog/2023/07/hbi-construction-labor-market-report-spring-2023>

<https://www.nchfa.com/construction-cost-increases-and-impact-housing-affordability>

<https://www.governing.com/urban/the-factors-driving-housing-costs-to-all-time-highs>

<https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/us/news/property/rising-insurance-costs-threaten-the-future-of-affordable-housing-developers-warn-502928.aspx>

<sup>vi</sup> [https://www.nahro.org/journal\\_article/rethinking-zoning-to-increase-affordable-housing/](https://www.nahro.org/journal_article/rethinking-zoning-to-increase-affordable-housing/)

<https://localhousingsolutions.org/housing-policy-library/streamlined-permitting-processes/>

<https://ternercenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Low-Income-Housing-Tax-Credit-Construction-Costs-An-Analysis-of-Prevailing-Wages-August-2024.pdf>