



FY25 CWS Federal Housing Priorities for Refugees and Other Newcomers

Refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and other newcomers' access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is essential to a foundation of healthy living. But today's housing market reveals tough-rooted inequities and a dearth of housing support, development and market availability, and affordability for renters and homeowners in communities all across the country. The United States faces a current [shortage of 7.3 million](#) affordable homes, a figure that has increased by 430,000 between 2019 and 2022. Refugees and other new Americans face particular challenges in accessing affordable, sustainable housing. The following asks encompass both comprehensive solutions to improve housing access for all as well as reforms that would address the acute challenges newcomer populations experience in the housing market.

Comprehensive Housing Asks

1. *Secure robust funding to expand affordable housing.*

Congress and the administration must ensure [robust funding](#) that not only maintains, but expands affordable housing under the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Collectively, HUD programs have served [over 1 million people](#) in just the last three years, [including many refugees and newcomers](#). Tenants that are low-income risk receiving no support at all as federal housing programs remain severely underfunded and only support [one in four](#) eligible applicants. Accounts to prioritize include:

- **Housing Counseling** and the **Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO)** assist states and localities in supporting vulnerable communities in their search for housing, combating landlord discrimination, and strengthening equitable access for all. These programs build on efforts to support housing equity, access, and target discrimination.
- **Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)** issue tax credits to states and localities for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households. States like [Ohio](#) have included refugees in their qualified allocation plan (QAP) that recognize them as a preference population and aid in their integration journey.
- **Homeless Assistance Grants** invests in solutions to a nationwide homeless population which has [increased by 12%](#) in just the last year. They include investments in local Community of Care programs through **emergency solutions grants**, which provide short to mid-term rental assistance for eligible individuals.
- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** works to improve the number and quality of emergency shelters, rapid rehousing, and homeownership support. Grants like the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program grant offer resettlement agencies and other nonprofits flexible financing for economic development and housing projects.

2. *Support legislation that promotes equitable housing access and rental relief.*

Supporting legislation that promotes healthy housing and that will help our housing market recover and grow. Bills that aim to provide extended relief to the nation's renters and homebuyers are much needed balm by providing rental relief, eviction prevention, family support vouchers, and promote residential mobility. Legislation to support includes:

- **American Housing and Economic Mobility Act of 2024** ([Senate](#)) aims to build 3 million new homes, provide homeownership and rental support, strengthen anti-discrimination laws, and improve the HCV program.
- **Rent Relief Act of 2024** ([S. 3865/H.R. 6721](#)) allows a refundable income tax credit for individuals who pay rent for a principal residence that exceeds 30% of their adjusted gross income for the taxable year.
- **Eviction Crisis Act** (*introduction forthcoming*) would fund a permanent federal emergency rental assistance (ERA) program to help stabilize households experiencing challenges before housing instability and homelessness occurs.
- **Family Stability and Opportunity Voucher Act** ([S. 1257/H.R. 3776](#)) would authorize a new type of housing choice voucher (HCV) to help end homelessness among families with children, increase housing opportunities, and improve life outcomes of vulnerable children.

3. *Expand and preserve affordable housing supply.*

There is currently [no state](#) in the nation that has enough affordable housing supply to meet the demand of families in need. From rural to urban areas, new arrivals and long-timers, the need for additional housing impacts many American families. It is imperative that the federal government works to preserve the existing housing supply and build new affordable homes. In order to achieve these solutions, Congress and the administration must work together to:

- **Build out the [Housing Trust Fund](#)** to build, rehabilitate, and operate 2 million homes for low-income families.
- **Strengthen the capacity of State Housing Finance Agencies** to more efficiently and effectively serve as the center of the nation's affordable housing finance system.
- **Promote multi-level approaches to growing housing supply** through programs like **Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY)** that prioritizes re-zoning, fund modular home developments, and other innovative solutions.
- **Provide housing resources to all income-eligible households**, regardless of immigration status.

Refugee and Newcomer Housing Asks

1. *Ensure robust funding for refugee housing and other integration programming.*

Congress must affirm the dignity of refugees, asylum seekers, and other newcomers, including by ensuring they have a safe place to call home. The United State's historic position as a leader providing humanitarian relief to displaced people overseas and welcoming those who arrive to our shores fleeing persecution strengthens our communities, advances U.S. diplomatic and national security interests, and promotes human flourishing. Essential accounts, authorization language, and funding for programs that promote refugee and asylum seeker housing include:

- **Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA)** – Through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), REA directly funds local communities' efforts to provide [core integration services](#), including housing, English language classes, and employment support to forcibly displaced newcomer populations.
- **Authorization for ORR to provide housing support** for [all ORR-eligible populations](#), such as refugees resettled through USRAP, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, asylees, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders who assist U.S. missions overseas, and others. Resettlement agencies benefited from the Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 (ASA) which [authorized](#) ORR to provide Refugee Support Services (RSS) base awards to states and communities that needed additional resources to adequately meet resettlement housing needs.
- **The Case Management Pilot Program (CMPP)** provides trauma-informed services like transitional housing, mental health care, and legal orientation programming to meet newcomers' basic needs..
- **The Shelter and Services Program (SSP)** supports border shelters' efforts to provide coordinated, effective reception for arriving asylum seekers, that meets new arrivals' most immediate needs for necessities like food, clothing, basic medical aid, and a safe place to go upon release from DHS custody.

2. *Support legislation that advances our nation's legacy of welcome.*

Legislation that is inclusive of newcomer populations in the United States is imperative for success. Congress must devote attention and support for housing supportive services that already exist and consider new programming that advances population-specific assistance. Opportunities for advancing inclusive legislation include:

- **The Refugee Protection Act (RPA)** (*reintroduction forthcoming*) which fortifies long-term strength of the refugee resettlement program and the asylum system. This bill would also expand protections to those who have assisted U.S. troops and immigrant children and families.
- **The Destination Reception Assistance Act (DRAA)** is a recently-introduced bill that would establish the Destination Reception Services Program to support cities that are welcoming significant numbers of new arrivals with resources for medium-term integration, such as housing services, mental health care, and legal assistance.
- Creation of a **Newcomer Housing Voucher** that directly assists the refugee and immigrant newcomer populations. The housing choice voucher program exists for a wide net of people, but a specified housing voucher for newcomers could bridge the gap between market rental rates and newcomer integration when housing waitlists stretch up to years. Efforts in [Michigan](#) and [Ohio](#) have proven the need and taken action in offering additional support for new Americans - actions we need our country's leaders to do as well.

3. *Congress and the Administration must end discrimination by enforcing renter protections for refugees and newcomers.*

Refugees and other new Americans experience acute challenges in accessing housing – facing discrimination from landlords due to delayed documentation, credit history, large family sizes, faith backgrounds, language abilities, and more. Collaboration between resettlement agencies, ORR, and PRM partners produced the [MOU between HUD and ORR](#) which facilitates equitable access to HUD-assisted resources for ORR-served populations through partnership, outreach, education and technical assistance. Additionally, the [Fact Sheet on Renting to Refugees and Other Newcomers](#) is an interagency response to uphold equitable processes between landlords and newcomer tenants.

We need true enforcement and appropriate implementation of Fair Housing laws from HUD. Methods of supporting renter protections and enforcing them include:

- **Expanding and enforcing the federal Fair Housing Act** to include immigration status, language, and source of income.
- **Endorsing the [National Tenant Bill of Rights](#)** to shift the balance of power between tenants and landlords, address racial and social inequities, and advance housing justice.
- **Implementation of HUD-specific full time employees to uphold newcomer specific portfolios** will acknowledge resettlement agencies' need for an expansion of HUD's capacity to directly assist newcomer populations.