

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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Report: Renters' Rights, Eviction Protections Key to Preventing Homelessness

(March 20, 2018, Washington, D.C.) – Strengthening tenants' rights can reduce housing instability and prevent homelessness, according to a new report released today by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. [*Protect Tenants, Prevent Homelessness*](#) details the relationships between renters' rights, evictions, and homelessness, highlighting issues low-income renters face and providing recommendations for improving housing security among vulnerable populations. The report follows a recent change in the U.S. Housing and Urban Development's mission statement, which removed language ensuring "quality, affordable homes for all" and access to housing "free from discrimination."

"Rising housing costs, stagnant wages, and job insecurity are putting millions at risk of losing their homes," said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. "The time is overdue for lawmakers to implement policy changes that not only end homelessness but prevent it from happening in the first place."

The report describes how a small and shrinking supply of affordable housing, combined with a large and growing demand, creates a power imbalance between landlords and renters, putting renters at further risk of evictions. The high demand leads renters to often spend far more than they can afford to keep their homes: 21 million renter households pay more than half of their total household income on housing, a record high.

"Unaffordable rents make homelessness a constant threat for families, elderly, and disabled people, yet the law often provides them little protection to remain in their homes," said Tristia Bauman, senior attorney at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and co-author of the report.

The report describes how homelessness is largely driven by the lack of affordable rental housing to people who need it; there are only 35 affordable rental units for every 100 extremely poor renter households. People of color are particularly harmed by housing instability and discriminatory rental policies.

The report cites a variety of supporting research, including a cost-benefit analysis of a legal right to counsel for tenants that found access to a housing attorney would reduce evictions by an estimated 77 percent and produce a net cost savings to cities. The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty recommends that governments place more emphasis on addressing underlying causes of housing insecurity and homelessness by preserving existing affordable housing and adopting laws that discourage housing insecurity and eviction.

Read the [full report here](#). An informational webinar about the report, featuring commentary from the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and guest authors of the report from the Virginia Poverty Law Center, the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, and Tenants Together, will be held on Thursday, March 22, at 2:00pm ET.

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The [National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](#) (the Law Center) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to prevent and end homelessness. With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.