



East Bay Housing Organizations



August 10, 2021

- The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senate
- The Honorable Alex Padilla, U.S. Senate
- The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Anna Eshoo, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable John Garamendi, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Jared Huffman, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Ro Khanna, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Barbara Lee, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Jerry McNerney, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Jackie Speier, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Eric Swalwell, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Mike Thompson, U.S. House of Representatives

**Re: Housing Priorities for the Bay Area Region**

Dear Bay Area Congressional Delegation Members:

Thank you for your historic, ongoing leadership in providing critical resources to the nation – and the Bay Area – to recover from the health, economic, and housing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have come together across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to

work in collaboration toward a more equitable housing recovery in our region, home to over 7.7 million people, and look to your leadership in helping us secure key housing investments, which only the federal government can meet.

Cities and counties across the region convened local economic recovery task forces early in the pandemic, identifying local priorities and actions to provide immediate relief and advance local recovery strategies. To build on the work of the regional economic recovery task forces, a coalition of public, private, and philanthropic partners came together to identify our region's most pressing state and federal priorities to ensure an equitable recovery. Common across the Bay Area was the recognition of affordable housing as a critical priority to ensure an equitable recovery.

In the Bay Area and around California, our communities face an acute shortage of affordable housing, worsened by a pandemic that has further revealed the vast inequities, especially facing Black, Brown, Asian Pacific Islander, and Indigenous communities. While there are numerous causes, millions of California families are housing insecure:<sup>1</sup>

- Tens of thousands are homeless. In 2019, 35,028 individuals were experiencing homelessness in Bay Area counties.
- Overall, 137,500 households, including 86,600 low-income Bay Area households, are at risk of eviction and collectively owe \$256 million in rent debt. If 10 percent of currently at-risk households became homeless, that would lead to a 44 percent increase in homelessness.
- The vast majority of renters who are behind on their rent have experienced job and income losses during the pandemic: 78 percent have lost employment income, while 81 percent earn less than \$75,000.
- As of 2017, 71 percent of necessary permits were issued for above moderate-income units, compared with only 9 to 13 percent for either very low, low, or moderate-income units in the current 2015 to 2023 housing cycle.<sup>2</sup>
- Due to generations of disinvestment, Black, Latinx, Native American, Mixed/other renters are more likely to be rent-burdened, particularly among female-headed renter households. Eighty-eight percent of renters who are behind on rent are people of color. Moreover, Black residents represent 29 percent of people experiencing homelessness in the region but only 6 percent of Bay Area residents.

As a coalition of leading housing providers, advocates, and experts working in the region, we are requesting that you fight on behalf of the following federal priorities that will directly improve millions of lives in the Bay Area:

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<sup>1</sup> "Indicators of an Equitable Recovery in the Bay Area." by PolicyLink for the Bay Area Equity Atlas, April 2021, [https://sff.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/3\\_IndicatorsOfEquitableRecovery\\_revised.pdf](https://sff.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/3_IndicatorsOfEquitableRecovery_revised.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "Affordable Housing Production," by the Bay Area Equity Atlas. <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/indicators/affordable-housing-production#/?geo=03000000000041860>

1. **Transform the Housing Choice Voucher program into a federal entitlement** so that every household that qualifies for assistance can receive it. We urge you to support House Financial Services Chairwoman Maxine Waters' visionary effort to advance this goal through the inclusion of the [Ending Homelessness Act of 2021](#) in reconciliation legislation this year. In addition to making vouchers an entitlement, the comprehensive Ending Homelessness Act of 2021 provides protections against discrimination based on source of income and funding for supportive services, creation of permanent affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness, and technical assistance for relevant state and local authorities. Together, these actions could end widespread homelessness as we know it.
2. **Invest in affordable housing** in reconciliation legislation this year by including Chairwoman Waters' [Housing is Infrastructure Act of 2021](#), which would provide over \$600 billion in housing infrastructure; and include in this flexible funding for innovative regional approaches for more equitable housing solutions. This transformational legislation would address the acute shortage of affordable housing and advance equity in the Bay Area and other parts of the country by investing in the creation and preservation of affordable and accessible housing, public housing, and community development, with set-asides for high and persistent poverty communities and measures that improve equitable planning and development processes to affirmatively advance fair housing. In addition, fully funding cross-jurisdictional solutions, such as the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA), within these programs will allow regions and metro areas across the country to elevate a commitment to racial equity, foster innovation to integrate housing solutions with regional transportation and climate strategies, and make each dollar invested in housing goes further than other piecemeal approaches would otherwise accomplish.
3. **Strengthen the Low Income Housing Tax Credit** – a crucial tool in the production of affordable housing – by enacting the bipartisan, bicameral [Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act](#) (AHCIA). Since its inception in 1986, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) has built or rehabilitated more than 3.5 million affordable housing units, making it the most successful federal policy to produce affordable rental housing. We thank you for your support of this meaningful tax credit. Today, AHCIA is needed to expand its impact in order to meet the scope of the current affordable housing crisis. AHCIA would help build more than two million new affordable housing units across the country, including 330,000 in California alone, in the next decade by increasing the amount of credits allocated to each state by 50 percent, increasing the number of affordable housing projects that can be built using private activity bonds, and making

improvements to the LIHTC to better serve victims of domestic violence, formerly homeless students, Native American communities, veterans, and rural Americans.

Advancing these priorities will spur desperately needed affordable housing production and ensure all residents have access to a safe, affordable place to call home. Thank you for contacting Christa Brown with the San Francisco Foundation at [christab@sff.org](mailto:christab@sff.org) so we can further discuss these priorities in the near future.

Sincerely,

London Breed  
Mayor, City of San Francisco

Sam Liccardo  
Mayor, City of San Jose

Libby Schaaf  
Mayor, City of Oakland

Tomiquia Moss  
Founder & Chief Executive,  
All Home

Margaret Peterson  
CEO,  
Catholic Charities East Bay

Monique Berlanga  
Interim Executive Director,  
Centro Legal de La Raza

Malcolm Yeung  
Executive Director,  
Chinatown Community  
Development Center

Don Gilmore  
Executive Director,  
Community Housing  
Development Corporation

James W. Head  
President & CEO,  
East Bay Community  
Foundation

Michael McAfee  
President and CEO,  
PolicyLink

Heather Hood  
VP and Market Leader,  
Northern California,  
Enterprise Community Partners

Cindy Wu  
Executive Director,  
LISC Bay Area

Leslye Corsiglia  
Executive Director,  
Silicon Valley @ Home

Guillermo Mayer  
President & CEO,  
Public Advocates

Fred Blackwell  
CEO,  
San Francisco Foundation

Nicole Taylor  
President and CEO,  
Silicon Valley Community  
Foundation

Amie Fishman  
Executive Director,  
Nonprofit Housing Association  
of Northern California

Gloria Bruce  
Executive Director,  
East Bay Housing  
Organization

Ellen Wu  
Executive Director,  
Urban Habitat

Alicia John-Baptiste  
President and CEO,  
SPUR

Omar Carrera  
CEO,  
Canal Alliance

Debra Gore-Mann  
President and CEO,  
The Greenlining Institute

Derecka Mehrens  
Executive Director,  
Working Partnerships USA