

Co-sponsor the Tenant Empowerment Act

Sending Office: Honorable Ayanna Pressley

Sent By: Jennifer.Curt@mail.house.gov

Dear Colleague,

Today, we unveiled the Tenant Empowerment Act, bold legislation to strengthen HUD tenant protections and provide them with the tools necessary to improve the quality of their homes.

In the face of an unprecedented affordable housing crisis, millions of cost-burdened families in America have seen their lives improved as a result of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s public and assisted rental housing programs. However, for some HUD residents, housing comes at the cost of their health. Too many residents face ongoing issues with the physical condition of their homes due to chronic underfunding, insufficient HUD oversight and enforcement, and lack of compliance with HUD requirements by some property owners.

Across the country, some tenants have been forced to live in substandard conditions, lacking sufficient hot water, reliable heat, or a roof that keeps out rain and snow. Tenants of color, in particular, are disproportionately impacted by health-related hazards in these homes such as mold, allergens, lead, and poor air quality.

The Tenant Empowerment Act will empower tenants with the tools they need to hold HUD and providers accountable for poor housing conditions and improve the quality of their homes by:

- Enabling tenants living in project-based housing to hold their rent contribution in escrow if HUD determines a unit is in serious violation of safe housing standards with the option of a negotiated rent release if the project owner reaches measurable repairs benchmarks;
- Providing them with the right to judicial enforcement of project owner agreements with HUD to ensure they address serious violations of housing standards or repeated violations of other program requirements, including the rights of residents to organize;
- Increasing transparency to residents by enabling them to access certain building information, including property management, annual operating statement of profits and loss, management reviews, inspection reports, and capital needs assessments;
- Funding tenant participation services, such as outreach and training of tenants and technical assistance;
- Extending right to organize protections to tenants in project-based voucher buildings;
- Establishing a national repair and deduct policy for housing choice voucher holders;
- Providing tenants with a seat at the table by allowing them to participate in certain portions of HUD's physical inspection and management review process; and
- Instituting measures that would ensure tenants' rental assistance payments are uninterrupted in case of a foreclosure.

Safe and stable housing should be a right and reality for every person in America. For decades, federally assisted tenants have organized, strategized, and demanded robust protections to improve substandard and unsafe housing conditions, stop retaliation, and hold housing providers accountable for neglectful and unfair practices. Congress

must heed their calls. It is time for a comprehensive approach to equity and justice in housing, centering the fair treatment of tenants, enforcement of their rights, and ensured housing stability.

To cosponsor this legislation, [fill out this form](#). If you have questions, please reach out to Jen Curt (Jennifer.Curt@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

Ayanna Pressley

Maxine Waters

Rashida Tlaib

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Endorsements: the National Alliance of HUD Tenants, Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Housing Law Project, Boston Tenant Coalition, Southwest Boston CDC, Georgetowne Tenants United, Keep Codman Affordable, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp, RESULTS, New York State Tenants & Neighbors, Friends of Melnea Cass Boulevard, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, HHERO (Harwell Homes Empowered Residents Organization), The Brownstones Alliance Inc., NYC HDFC (New York Council of Housing Development Fund Companies), A. Philip Randolph Square Neighborhood Alliance, Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Greater Syracuse Tenants Network, Planning Office for Urban Affairs, George Wiley Center, Our Ancestors Church & Coven, ACE (Alternatives for Community and Environment), Granite State Organizing Project, Tenants Union of Washington State, Vision for Families, Tenants Association Riverside Townhomes, Alaska House Residents Association, St. Botolph Tenants Union, Oregon Renters in Action, NYS Tenants & Neighbors, Ida Apartments, Coalition for Economic Survival - Los Angeles, North Little Rock Resident's Council, News and InformaHuman Servicetion TV Program, CCTV Cambridge, Massachusetts, Mechanicsville Senior Tenant Association, Mass. Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC), Metropolitan Tenants Organization, National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders, 2 and 4 River Road Tenants Association, Material Aid and Advocacy Program, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc., The Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco, The House of Imani Foundation, Inc., Material Aid and Advocacy Program, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc., The Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco, the House of Imani Foundation, Inc., Faces of HUD Housing (Unity Project), Helping Others Make Everything Right (HOMER), and ROC.

Related Legislative Issues

Selected legislative information: Consumer Affairs, Family Issues, Finance, HealthCare

[Manage Your Subscriptions](#)



e-Dear Colleague version 2.2.1



[Contact eDC Support](#)

e-Dear Colleagues are intended for internal House use only.