

## 2026 Funding and Reform Priorities

### ➤ ***End Homelessness: Housing Vouchers***

With a cost of living substantially higher than the national average, D.C. is one of the most expensive cities in which to live. Despite an early Bowser Administration promise to end all homelessness by 2020, D.C. residents are still experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness at alarming rates. The vast majority of people experiencing homelessness in D.C. need permanent housing assistance to maintain housing stability. Additionally, due to laws providing for more opportunities for release from incarceration, there is an urgent need to fund housing for D.C. residents returning home and rebuilding lives post-incarceration. Funding housing vouchers is the fastest way to end homelessness. One type of voucher is not sufficient to serve all D.C. residents in desperate need of housing. D.C. must fund diverse types of vouchers to serve the varying needs of those experiencing homelessness, including a robust investment in vouchers that minimize barriers for those seeking access to them.

In recent years, poor agency coordination and administration have caused unnecessary delays in housing D.C. residents. However, even when those voucher resources are effectively distributed, the need for housing exceeds the resources provided. Last budget season, D.C. government funded zero vouchers for individuals experiencing homelessness. While some vouchers for families were funded, the amount is woefully inadequate to meet the need. The 2026 Point-in-Time Count was canceled this year due to freezing weather conditions. Unfortunately, residents experiencing homelessness endure harsh and hypothermic conditions regularly. At least seventy-eight (78) unhoused residents died while living outside in 2025. Such deaths should be unacceptable in a place as well-resourced as D.C.

Lately, agency voucher cost discrepancies have arisen *after* the budget process has concluded and funds have already been allocated, resulting in fewer resources than community members and the D.C. Council have anticipated. D.C. must allocate funding more substantially and transparently in FY27, invest in outreach, and increase oversight of DHS and DCHA to ensure funds are used as intended and to reduce delays in voucher processing.

**Our Recommendation:**

- Increase funding for all permanent voucher programs.
- Increase DHS budget transparency.
- Increase oversight of Department of Human Services (DHS) and D.C. Housing Authority (DCHA) to reduce bureaucracy that prolongs homelessness due to delays in distributing and utilizing vouchers.
- Increase investment in homelessness outreach services.

**Budget Impact:**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Households</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)-Individuals	1260 (multi-year ask for three consecutive years)	Estimated \$36.29M/year
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)-Families	782	Estimated \$37.63M
Targeted Affordable Housing (TAH)	938	Estimated \$40.87M
LRSP Tenant Vouchers	2988	Estimated \$94.1M
LRSP vouchers for returning citizens	60	Estimated \$1.89M
Outreach	—	Estimated \$6.4M
<b>Total</b>	<b>6028</b>	<b>\$217.18M</b>

➤ ***Improve Shelter Conditions, Expand Non-Congregate Shelters, and Fund Storage Options for Unhoused Individuals***

Most shelters for single adults in D.C. are large, congregate spaces with a variety of poor conditions. Residents experiencing street homelessness often cite these conditions, safety concerns, and/or restrictive shelter rules as reasons to avoid staying in D.C.'s shelters. Generally, shelters do not permit pets or allow families without minor children to shelter together. Additionally, shelters do not permit people to enter with more than two bags of personal belongings. When faced with the choice of keeping belongings or entering shelter, a lack of storage is a clear barrier to shelter access. Developing shelters and protocols that meet expressed needs will reduce street homelessness and improve experiences and outcomes for shelter residents.

The Bowser Administration invested the requisite funds to ensure that two non-congregate shelters could be completed. It is of paramount importance to ensure that the existing shelters are operating at their intended maximum capacity, utilizing all available space to provide safe shelter for those who need it. D.C. must also increase non-congregate shelter spaces across all wards of the District of Columbia. D.C. should invest additional funding to convert more of its low-barrier shelters into humane and private spaces that respect and reflect diverse family structures and needs.

**Our Recommendation:**

- Fully fund and implement the *Pets in Housing Amendment Act of 2024*.
- Fund secure storage options to safeguard the belongings of those experiencing homelessness.
- Enact legislative policies to ensure that all shelters, including current and future non-congregate shelter sites, reduce access barriers and operate at intended maximum capacity, including with legal protections pursuant to the Homeless Services Reform Act (HSRA).
- Invest additional funds for future non-congregate shelter sites.

**Budget Impact:** \$1.5M for storage options; (TBD) funding for expansion of current sites and development of future non-congregate sites

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➤ ***Stop Harmful Encampment Evictions***

While the Bowser Administration has been aggressively removing encampments for years, federal government pressure has contributed to increased encampment evictions. The Bowser Administration and federal government have continued to escalate efforts to evict unhoused community members from encampments, causing displacement, trauma, and a disconnection from service providers. The encampment evictions are inhumane, dangerous, and prompted (at least, in part) by complaints from housed residents about the presence of those who are experiencing homelessness in their neighborhoods. Additionally, many clearings are determined and executed unilaterally by the Bowser Administration after broadly citing a “public health and safety risk” without evidence, adequate notice, clear metrics, or transparent policies defining or justifying that determination. When people are displaced without any housing resources, there should be no barriers to accessing safe shelter. A lack of storage options is a major barrier to shelter access. Unhoused residents should not have to choose between seeking shelter and keeping their belongings. With heightened [federal government](#) interest in the removal of D.C. encampments and increased federal law enforcement presence exacerbating unhoused vulnerabilities, D.C. must consider ways to better protect unhoused residents and minimize their interactions with law enforcement. D.C. should fully understand and acknowledge that eliminating the visibility of homelessness does not eliminate homelessness. The solution to homelessness is housing, not further displacement and dispossession.

<b>Our Recommendation:</b>
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- Suspend all full encampment clearings. Instead, conduct trash-only cleanings, provide additional trash cans at encampments, and maintain portable bathrooms and hand-washing stations.

- Reallocate encampment clearing funds to invest in housing resources that end homelessness.
- Create legislative policies that standardize requirements/criteria and definitions related to encampment evictions, establishing due process for encampment residents and minimizing opportunity for random and/or politicized encampment evictions.
- Suspend any D.C. government efforts to direct or cooperate with any federal government targeting of encampments for evictions/displacement.
- Create legislative policies to protect unhoused residents, including by expanding the right to shelter and minimizing the opportunity for “quality of life” crime enforcement.

**Budget Impact:** TBD. In FY25, D.C. spent more than \$3.3 million on encampment evictions. Funds saved by stopping forced displacement could be reinvested into housing resources that actually end homelessness.

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➤ ***Reform and Expand Access to Family Shelter System***

DHS is operating a family shelter intake system that is high-barrier and burdensome, leaving many unhoused families with no option other than to remain in unsafe environments. Intake workers regularly deny eligibility to families, require arbitrary and extensive documentation of homelessness in consideration of placement, and refuse to provide lawful notices of ineligibility when families are denied services—all in violation of the Homeless Services Reform Act (HSRA). The Legal Clinic regularly assists family shelter applicants in enforcing their existing legal rights after a denial for shelter placement. Since the 2024 relocation of the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center, DHS has prohibited our staff from doing legal support outreach to shelter applicants at that site. As a result, our ability to immediately inform applicants of their right to appeal and/or assist those that receive unlawful denials has drastically decreased. Of course, families seeking low-barrier emergency shelter should not have to seek and obtain legal assistance to access emergency shelter. The current family shelter system eligibility process must be reformed to truly serve the needs of families seeking accessible and low-barrier emergency shelter.

### **Our Recommendation:**

- Amend the Homeless Services Reform Act (HSRA) to require a low-barrier and humane family shelter, including reintroduction, passage, and funding of the *Housing is Maternal Health Amendment Act of 2024*.
- Implement consistent and standardized staff training so that families are not routinely, arbitrarily, and unlawfully denied shelter placements or refused written shelter denial notices.
- Increase reporting and data on access, eligibility, and denials to D.C. shelter services.
- Require DHS to permit legal services outreach at Virginia Williams Family Resource Center.

**Budget Impact:** N/A

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#### ➤ ***Prevent Housing Instability and Repeated Homelessness for Residents with Extremely Low Incomes***

DHS has prioritized efforts to commit nearly all of its housing resources to temporary and shallow subsidies that are incapable of sustaining housing stability for residents with extremely low incomes, the overwhelming majority of those seeking agency services. Over the last two years, DHS has executed its plan to terminate thousands of Rapid Re-Housing Program (RRH) participant families and individuals for reaching an arbitrary twelve-month time limit, without exception or consideration as to what would happen to them after their housing subsidies ended. Despite DHS' own data indicating that at least 97% of families in the program cannot afford to maintain their housing upon program exit or termination, no meaningful reforms or permanent resources to disrupt the cycle of homelessness have been implemented.

Instead, D.C.'s short-term and shallow subsidy housing programs increase harm and trauma, too often leaving program participants and subsidy recipients in a worse financial and housing predicament than when they originally sought agency assistance. Subsidies based on arbitrary deadlines and/or inadequate amounts are not appropriate or effective for residents that do not have sufficient income to maintain housing once the subsidy expires. DHS cannot

continue to focus its efforts on programs and policies that *knowingly* result in mass displacement and homelessness for D.C. residents. D.C. must meaningfully consider the housing needs of residents that cannot afford D.C. rents and make substantial investments in housing and supplemental resources that keep people permanently housed.

**Our Recommendation:**

- Require accurate and transparent program data and costs from DHS in all of its time-limited and shallow housing subsidy programs, including data on the long-term housing stability of participants after the assistance has ended.
- Evaluate current DHS program outcomes and barriers to more appropriately invest in permanent housing stability.
- Fund permanent housing subsidies.

**Budget Impact:** TBD (DHS has resisted transparency in its reporting of data and costs of its various time-limited and shallow subsidy programs). Shifting existing program funds to more effective housing programs would improve utilization of housing resources and reduce the overall gap in funding needed for housing vouchers that end homelessness.

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➤ ***Expand Access to Emergency Rental Assistance***

Rising unaffordability has only exacerbated the economic crisis for thousands of D.C. residents unable to pay critical utilities or rent. According to the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, nearly half of D.C. residents are rent burdened, while more than half of Black residents are rent burdened. A recent [study on evictions in D.C.](#) found that, despite plummeting eviction numbers during the pandemic, D.C. is now on track to reach a seven-year high in evictions.

With the significant cuts to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and underinvestment in housing resources in FY26, housing instability will increase. D.C. must ensure that there is adequate relief funding to prevent continued harm and keep residents housed. ERAP plays a critical role in preventing homelessness and evictions by providing rental

assistance to tenants that need help paying rental arrears. Unfortunately, in response to landlord complaints and threats about D.C.'s future rental housing infrastructure, the law now significantly restricts ERAP eligibility and expedites evictions. Despite landlord narratives that the eviction process has become more difficult, data actually shows that D.C. evictions have increased. Colleagues who closely track eviction data indicate that evictions increased by thirty-three percent (33%) in 2025, as compared to 2024. D.C. Council should reject falsehoods based in fear and greed, unsubstantiated allegations of fraud, and racist and classist myths to advance legislation that expands ERAP access, includes landlord accountability, and improves DHS's poor ERAP administration.

The ERAP application appointment rollout in November 2025 was a complete administrative and planning failure. The high demand for ERAP funds, lack of outreach regarding new and decreased program eligibility, confusing implementation of the portal and process, and inconsistent administration of funds has led to program inaccessibility for too many residents. ERAP must be more accessible and substantially funded to meet the current and future need. Thousands of D.C. households are struggling to maintain their housing and facing eviction and homelessness without other assistance.

**Our Recommendation:**

- Revise and pass updated ERAP legislation that reverses the harm of the current legislation, expands access, and requires landlord accountability in regard to cooperation with the ERAP application process.
- Improve the ERAP application process to ensure it is fully accessible, low-barrier, and legally compliant.
- Increase Council oversight and legislative efforts to require consistency in ERAP administration and distribution and regular agency reporting, including timelines, staffing, delays of administering organizations, and demographics of approved residents.

- Ensure residents can access sufficient funds to prevent massive displacement/eviction, trauma, and homelessness.

**Budget Impact:** TBD

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➤ ***Invest in Public Housing Preservation, Maintenance, & Oversight***

For decades, D.C. public housing residents have complained about the deplorable conditions and dilapidated buildings in which they have been forced to reside. Due to years of disinvestment and neglect, these properties are in extreme disrepair. DCHA is the largest landowner in the city and the source of the largest stock of large family units. Currently, ninety-five (95%) percent of the residents in DCHA properties are within the 0-30 percent Area Median Income (AMI) range, or extremely low income. Approximately ninety-one (91%) percent of D.C.'s public housing residents are also Black. Public housing is the only truly deeply affordable housing in D.C. A lack of investment in public housing will lead to further displacement of D.C.'s lowest-income and Black residents. For the last few years, D.C. has consistently invested funds for public housing. However, overall investment decreased in FY26. Funding for public housing repairs and maintenance must continue in order to improve the living conditions and health outcomes of public housing residents.

For several years now, the D.C. Housing Authority has been in the process of contemplating and executing a large-scale public housing transformation process that will demolish and/or renovate several public housing properties. While any redevelopment plan is certainly about building restoration, it must fundamentally center the residents whose homes are within those buildings, now and in the future. Now, as DCHA faces another hiring process for its fourth executive in approximately five years, oversight is of heightened importance. D.C. Council must utilize its oversight abilities to do everything within its power to protect D.C.'s lowest-income residents and their access to housing in D.C.

**Our Recommendation:**

- Commit to a recurring \$60 million that will address the substantial preservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment needs of D.C.’s public housing properties.
- Require quarterly reporting on how funds are utilized and whether funds are actually providing relief and improvements for D.C.’s public housing residents, including reporting on the progress of restoring vacant units to habitability.
- Reintroduce the *Public Housing Preservation and Tenant Protection Amendment Act of 2020* and include its language in the Budget Support Act (BSA) to memorialize DCHA’s stated commitment to its residents, ensuring that public housing residents can rightfully access the housing that is intended for them upon any property redevelopment or transformation.
- Support thoughtful legislation that creates a more effective, accountable, and independent Board of Commissioners—one that is committed to DCHA’s mission of creating and providing low and extremely low-income housing.

**Budget Impact:** \$60 million, recurring

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➤ ***Maintain a Commitment to the Production of Deeply Affordable Housing***

D.C. has an affordable housing crisis. Deeply affordable housing (0-30% AMI) in D.C. continues to be the least available and most needed. National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) [data](#) indicates that more than 59,000 D.C. renters have extremely low incomes (0-30% AMI) and seventy-four percent (74%) of extremely low-income households are severely burdened with housing costs. D.C.’s stock of affordable housing for people with extremely low incomes (0-30% of Area Median Income (AMI)) continues to be the most neglected in affordable housing creation, despite the law requiring that at least half of the money in the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) be used for 0-30% AMI housing. Consistently, 0-30% AMI housing (i.e., deeply affordable) is under-funded and existing funds are not used as intended.

According to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) reporting, only 19% of the HPTF was used for 0-30% AMI housing in 2022. Reporting indicates

that forty-three percent (43%) of HPTF funds were used to support deeply affordable housing in 2023, a substantial improvement from previous years yet *still* not where it should be. However, that progress is evidence of the impact of stronger legislative oversight and increased agency intent--additional HPTF reporting requirements were passed through the inclusion of the *Housing Production Trust Fund Accountability and Transparency Amendment Act* in FY23's Budget Support Act. Continued compliance must be enforced, and reporting requirements should go further. Such a large fund needs increased oversight and legislative protections/enforcement to ensure that money intended for 0-30% AMI housing is used for 0-30% AMI housing.

D.C. cannot plan for or promise an increase of “affordable housing” without transparency as to which residents will be able to afford it. AMI in this region is extremely high. Generally, “affordable housing” includes housing accessible to households earning up to 80% AMI. Currently in D.C., eighty percent (80%) AMI for a household of four equates to a family with an income as high as \$131,000. Fifty percent (50%) AMI for that same family means a household income of up to \$81,950. Thirty percent (30%) AMI for that household is an income of up to \$49,150. Affordable housing conversations that do not acknowledge the actual range of potential affordability or distinguish housing needs of residents with \$0 incomes from affordability needs of residents with \$131,000 incomes are harmful. It is imperative that D.C. thoughtfully plans for and affirms its commitment to deeply affordable housing creation.

**Our Recommendation:**

- Oppose any legislation that intends to deprioritize and undermine the existing legislative commitment to dedicating at least fifty percent (50%) of housing production/creation funds for deeply affordable housing (accessible to residents with incomes at 0-30% AMI).
- Maintain sufficient Local Rent Supplement Program (LRSP) matching operating funds so that the full amount of 0-30% AMI (deeply affordable) housing can be maintained/operated.

- Increase and improve Council oversight: ensure that DHCD is compliant with all existing reporting requirements and expand requirements by incorporating additional provisions of the *Housing Production Trust Fund Transparency Amendment Act of 2021* that would further increase transparency and reporting requirements.
- Create additional legislative protections and enforcement to ensure that money meant for 0-30% AMI affordable housing creation (half of HPTF) is used as intended, including consideration of separating out the half of the fund that is required for 0-30% AMI housing to achieve better transparency of fund distributions.

**Budget Impact:** Maintain sufficient LRSP operating funding to match all units that are created for 0-30% AMI residents.

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➤ ***Minimize Tenant Barriers***

Too often, applicants searching for housing face unfair and unlawful barriers to housing. In 2022, Council passed the *Eviction Record Sealing and Fairness in Renting Amendment Act*, significant legislation that creates a process for eviction record sealing, strengthens eviction provisions, and defines greater accountability, expectations, and rights within the tenant screening process. Unfortunately, some housing providers attempted to find loopholes to continue violating tenant and applicant rights. In summer of 2023, the *Fairness in Renting Clarification Amendment Act* was passed in an effort to further define and clarify the 2022 legislation. The *Second Chance Amendment Act* went into effect in March 2025, simplifying the process and increasing opportunities for criminal record sealing and expungement. While, together, the existing pieces of legislation are a monumental step towards achieving greater housing and economic access, there are still several barriers that must be further explored and addressed to increase access to housing, including harmful consideration of credit scores and criminal records, lack of screening report accuracy standards and tenant screening company regulations, restrictive fees, and other existing factors that contribute to a burdensome and discriminatory process for D.C.'s predominantly Black and marginalized communities.

**Our Recommendation:**

- Prioritize expanding access to housing by creating legislative policies that minimize and/or eliminate existing tenant barriers, including removing and/or reducing fees that restrict housing options.

**Budget Impact:** TBD