



Georgia ACT

2019 Policy and Advocacy Agenda

Georgia Advancing Communities Together (Georgia ACT) is a statewide membership organization, which represents the state's nonprofit housing, and community development organizations. Our mission is to build and support a statewide network of thriving member organizations and trained professionals engaged in housing and community development serving families with limited housing choices.

We advocate for a more favorable policy environment for the nonprofit housing industry. We represent the nonprofit housing and community development industry to state and federal government (both executive and legislative branches), stakeholders, and other organizations targeting a similar population. Georgia ACT seeks greater resources to support the nonprofit industry and provides forums where nonprofit organizations can network, exchange information through peer learning, and recognize member contributions.

In addition, we provide communication tools to inform members of upcoming activities and promote nonprofit housing and community development issues, act as an informational resource for the public on the activities of the nonprofit housing and community development industry, and commission research regarding the affordable housing and community development industry.

Georgia law provides a commitment to safe, decent, affordable housing for all. Georgia Advancing Communities Together (Georgia ACT) is dedicated to engaging a broad coalition of organizations and individuals to make that vision a reality that creates stronger, healthier, better educated and more successful communities.

Housing is the bedrock for strong families and vibrant communities. Today, one out of every five Georgia families is paying over 50% of their income for housing – a challenge that is unaffordable and results in housing that is insecure, uninhabitable or nonexistent.

Georgia ACT's Policy and Advocacy Agenda supports strengthening resources and commitments to meet the affordable housing needs for all sectors and income levels, including rural, underserved, and vulnerable populations of seniors, children, and people with disabilities.



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Georgia ACT's State Policy Priorities:

Increase Resources and Opportunities to Provide Housing for All

- **Healthy Housing protection** against eviction for complaints to code enforcement regarding children and vulnerable adults sickened and endangered by unhealthy, unsafe rental housing.
- **Address “contract for deed” predatory lending practices** that deceive “buyers” into false purchases that confer all the obligations of home ownership and none of the protections.
- **Support blight amelioration grants** for volunteer neighborhood clean-up efforts.
- **Support \$2.5 Million for supportive housing for 700 homeless people** with severe and persistent mental illness now cycling through hospitals, emergency rooms, prisons and jails.
- **Support a Constitutional amendment for dedication of general revenue to specific purposes by general law and without a statewide referendum. ([HR 164](#))**

Additional State Goals:

- **Empower cities and counties to establish Local Housing Trust Funds with more options for dedicated revenue streams** to fund their specific affordable housing needs.
- **Protect the State Low Income Housing Tax Credit** as a significant and continuing source of funding for new affordable multi-family housing statewide.
- **Maximize Georgia's access to federal funding that supports affordable housing.**
- **Increase resources to the Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless** to establish added permanent housing options so that homelessness is temporary and rare.
- **Enable local communities to use zoning, tax and financial incentives** to support preservation and development of housing that meets the needs of families across the economic spectrum.
- **Allow communities to extend public subsidies** to achieve long-term housing affordability.
- **Strengthen connections** between housing, good jobs, quality schools and transit options.



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- **Support community development in rural communities** by increasing access to broadband, public transit, disaster relief for homeowners and renters in the wake of Hurricanes Michael, Florence, and other natural disasters.
- **Establish a State Housing Affordability Task Force** to prioritize solutions for low cost housing.
- **Prohibit “Source of Income” Discrimination** for Georgia renters who receive public or state housing subsidies.

Local Legislative Priorities:

- **City of Atlanta:**
 - Authorize owners of Community Land Trust homes to receive the same homestead exemptions as other homeowners.
 - Allow local governments to waive development impact fees for projects that provide affordable housing without requiring replenishment from sources other than the development impact fee fund.
- **Cordele/Crisp County:** Establish a Land Bank Authority.

Georgia ACT’s Federal Policy Priorities

(Courtesy of the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition. Georgia ACT is the Georgia State Intermediary for the NLIHC and NCRC)

- Protecting, expanding and monitoring the implementation of the National Housing Trust Fund. The National Housing Trust Fund is the first new housing resource in a generation. It is exclusively targeted to help build, preserve, and rehabilitate housing for people with the lowest incomes. NLIHC, its members, and other stakeholders played a critical role in the creation of the Housing Trust Fund in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. In 2016, the first \$174 million in HTF dollars were allocated to states. In 2017, \$219 million was available, and in 2018, \$267 million is available.
- Preserving and increasing resources for federal affordable housing programs serving extremely low-income families.
 - Despite a proven track record, federal housing programs have been chronically underfunded. NLIHC and Georgia ACT advocates for increased funding for Housing Choice Vouchers, public housing, project-based rental assistance, the HOME Investment Partnerships program, and homeless assistance grants, among many other

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programs. We opposes efforts to cut housing benefits by imposing arbitrary work requirements, time limits, and other restrictions. These so-called reforms are neither cost effective nor a solution to the very real issue of poverty impacting millions of families living in subsidized housing or in need.

- NLIHC and Georgia ACT supports the creation of a new, innovative renters' tax credit to help the lowest income families afford a place to call home. Moreover, any expansion of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit should be tied to reforms to ensure that the program better serves families with the greatest needs. NLIHC and Georgia ACT will also work to preserve and expand affordable housing available in rural areas by supporting funding for USDA Rural Development programs and opportunities to preserve the agency's rental housing portfolio.
- NLIHC and Georgia ACT advocates for the creation of a National Housing Stabilization Fund to provide emergency assistance to low income households to prevent housing instability and homelessness. Temporary assistance can stabilize households experiencing major economic shocks before it leads to situations which require more prolonged and extensive housing assistance.
- Ensuring federal disaster recovery efforts are fair and equitable. The NLIHC and Georgia ACT will work to ensure that all displaced families have a safe, accessible, and affordable place to live while they get back on their feet. Georgia ACT is a member of the NLIHC's Disaster Recovery Coalition. The Disaster Recovery Coalition works to ensure that federal disaster recovery efforts reach all impacted households, including the lowest income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and other at-risk populations who are often the hardest-hit by disasters.
- Promoting equitable access to affordable housing.
 - NLIHC and Georgia ACT supports the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule issued in 2015 that helps communities better meet their fair housing obligations and promotes housing choice. Also, the NLIHC and Georgia ACT supports increasing mobility opportunities through new allocations of special mobility vouchers, expanded mobility counseling, and regional mobility programs, as well as the continued implementation of HUD Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs) in certain metropolitan areas that protect current and future tenants.



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- NLIHC and Georgia ACT supports expanding the Fair Housing Act to bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, and source of income.
- NLIHC and Georgia ACT advocates for safe, stable, affordable and accessible housing for those who have been involved in the criminal or juvenile justice system. By eliminating the barriers to housing and supporting programs that help formerly incarcerated people successfully reintegrate into their communities, people with criminal records can make the most of their second chance. In addition, NLIHC and Georgia ACT advocates to end the criminalization of homelessness. Nationwide, homeless people are targeted, arrested, and jailed under laws that criminalize homelessness by making illegal those basic acts that are necessary for life.
- Championing anti-poverty solutions. NLIHC supports efforts to protect vital safety net programs, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), unemployment insurance, Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Affordable Care Act, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Moreover, NLIHC and Georgia strongly supports efforts to increase the minimum wage and to target federal resources to communities with persistent poverty. Through Georgia ACT's partners at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC), Georgia ACT will advocate to legislators and monitor regulators' ability to strengthen the CRA, so that underserved communities have greater access to credit and capital.

Georgia ACT's State and Federal Policy Action Strategies:

- **Housing Day at the Georgia State Capitol on February 27, 2019** (*in partnership with Enterprise Community Partners and the Empire Board of Realtors, Inc.*) – Advocacy Training and Engagement from 7:30am to 2:00pm. Register at <https://georgiaact.org/advocacy/housingday2019/>
- **Messaging and Advocacy Training Webinar for Housing Day at the Georgia State Capitol** – February 19, 2019 at 12:30 p.m.
- **Advocacy updates and alerts** throughout the legislative session to empower statewide engagement with legislators on affordable housing priorities.

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- **Engage Department of Community Affairs** to increase access to affordable housing through:
 - Enforcement of annual state housing goals and legislative reporting requirements.
 - Increase State Plan commitments for housing low-income families.
- **Expand the coalition** of organizations working together to increase access to safe, decent, affordable housing for all Georgians.
- **Expand public education on affordable housing** to raise awareness.
- **Obtain input from organizations, municipalities, practitioners, and advocates** throughout the state of Georgia on affordable housing issues to build a 2020 legislative agenda.
- **Participation of “Hill Day” in Washington, DC** from our national partners including the National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, and National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations, Center for Community Change, etc.
- **Advocacy engagements with U.S. House, Senators, and other federal agencies** via sign-on letters, phone calls, Facebook, Twitter (Twitter storms), and Instagram.
- **Advocacy updates and alerts throughout the year** to expand public education on affordable housing, anti-poverty initiatives, and community development issues via newsletters, social media, webinars (Zoom), in-person meetings, and listening sessions.

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