

NCH Public Policy Recommendations **Bring America Home Act**

RECOMMENDATIONS

End homelessness through a comprehensive national response that addresses the housing, health care, income, and civil rights causal factors and consequences of extreme poverty.

U.S. Representatives - Introduce or co-sponsor the Bring America Home Act, a legislative proposal of the National Coalition for the Homeless to end mass homelessness in the United States.

U.S. Senators - Introduce or co-sponsor the Bring America Home Act, a legislative proposal of the National Coalition for the Homeless to end mass homelessness in the United States.

ISSUE STATUS

The Bring America Home Act is a legislative proposal of the National Coalition for the Homeless. The legislation was introduced in the 108th and 109th Congresses (H.R. 4347 in the 109th Congress) by then-U.S. Representative Julia Carson (D-IN). Representative Carson was strengthening the bill since its first drafting five years ago and was preparing it for re-introduction in the 110th Congress when she passed in late 2007. NCH is now preparing the bill for re-introduction in the 111th Congress, in continuation of the larger movement to end mass homelessness in the United States.

OVERVIEW OF THE BRING AMERICA HOME ACT

The Bring America Home Act (BAHA) seeks to end homelessness in the United States. The legislation includes housing security, economic security, health security, and civil rights provisions. The proposed legislation represents the most comprehensive initiative to date to address modern homelessness. Its provisions are grounded in research, data, and the experience of front line providers and advocates.

BAHA HOUSING SECURITY PROVISIONS

- Establishes a national goal of ending homelessness by fulfilling the human need of housing.
- Strengthens the National Housing Trust Fund.
- Adds additional funding sources for the National Housing Trust Fund.
- Authorizes 1,500,000 additional Section 8 vouchers for low-income families over ten years.
- Dedicates targeted Section 8 vouchers for homeless veterans.
- Dedicates targeted Section 8 vouchers for homeless youth and for youth exiting foster care.
- Establishes a new rural rental housing assistance program.
- Increases authorization levels of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) Housing Programs.
- Authorizes permanent housing as an eligible use of surplus federal property under the McKinney-Vento Title V Surplus Federal Property program.
- Authorizes a Mutual Housing demonstration program to provide housing cooperatives.
- Establishes a requirement that use of any federal dollars used for demolition would require a replacement resulting in no net loss of units.

- Establishes in the U.S. Treasury an Emergency Rent Relief Fund directing the Secretary of HUD to provide grants for emergency rent relief payments to landlords on behalf of tenants facing eviction.
- Reauthorizes and strengthens HUD McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs.
- Establishes a new rural homeless assistance program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Establishes protections for tenants facing evictions due to foreclosure.
- Provides tax credits for rehabilitation of housing for low-income persons.
- Expands fair housing protections to prevent source of income discrimination against persons receiving federal housing assistance.
- Authorizes use of Community Development Block Grant funds for jurisdictions to enforce housing codes and provide relocation assistance for tenants living in uninhabitable dwellings.
- Increases authorization for federal Neighborhood Stabilization Fund (program to preserve affordable housing through foreclosure purchase/leaseback).

BAHA HEALTH CARE SECURITY PROVISIONS

- Establishes for each American a universal health insurance system, using a single payer model.
- Strengthens homeless persons' access to mainstream addiction and mental health services programs including the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant programs.
- Reauthorizes and strengthens the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) and Grants for the Benefit of Homeless Individuals (GBHI) programs.
- Strengthens homeless persons' access to Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act services.

BAHA ECONOMIC SECURITY PROVISIONS

- Establishes for each American a universal livable income indexed to the cost of housing.
- Provides temporary workers the same protections as those afforded permanent workers.
- Improves homeless persons' access to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services.
- Establishes a 'Homebuild' Program for people experiencing homelessness to assist those who have experienced significant barriers to employment through training and apprenticeship programs.
- Establishes apprenticeships in skilled trades for homeless persons.
- Requires the Social Security Administration to collect data, engage in outreach and expedite application processing of people experiencing homelessness.
- Repeals statute that allows homeless people to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for only six out of every nine months they reside in public emergency shelter.
- Increases the asset limit for SSI to \$3,000 for an individual and \$4,500 for a couple, and provides presumptive eligibility for people experiencing homelessness.
- Improves homeless persons' access to Food Stamps.

BAHA CIVIL RIGHTS PROVISIONS

- Removes homeless persons' barriers to obtaining identification.
- Requires communities receiving homeless assistance dollars to certify they are not criminalizing homelessness through laws and ordinances.
- Penalizes communities criminalizing homelessness by sanctioning Byrne Justice Memorial Grant funds.
- Adds homeless persons as a protected class to hate crime statistics and enforcement acts.
- Provides funding to Legal Services Corporation to provide legal representation in eviction proceedings.