



Funders Together

TO END HOMELESSNESS



Policy Alert

What's Happening: Public Comment Period Open for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

Earlier this month, HUD published its [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing](#) and set the deadline for public comment to April 10, 2023. The proposed rule requires that federally funded housing programs must identify fair housing issues, set priorities, and establish community Equity Plans. The rule [builds on the original 2015 policy](#) and prioritizes community engagement, transparency, oversight, and accountability in advance in this unmet mandate of the Fair Housing Act.

This public comment period is a critical opportunity for our sector to support federal efforts to advance housing justice and to hold our communities accountable to fair housing.

Funders Together is working with [Funders for Housing and Opportunity \(FHO\)](#) to [develop templates and tools for members of philanthropy](#) to submit comments in support of the AFFH as a mechanism to advance housing justice. To learn more, [review our AFFH Proposed Rule Action page](#).

We also invite you to [join our funder call on Tuesday, March 14 at 12pm ET / 9am PT](#) to learn more about the public comment process, general messaging philanthropy can use for public comments, and how to support community partners in action around AFFH as well.

How Philanthropy Can Take Action

As advocates may recall from past federal advocacy efforts, it's important to organize and offer our best analysis, support, and argumentation for the rule. The comment period offers an opportunity for our sector and partners to reflect on local history and the impact of racial segregation and subjugation through housing policy over time.

Our partners at [PolicyLink frame AFFH as an opportunity to advance just housing futures](#) where communities:

- Most affected by disinvestment shape our housing futures,
- Protect and prioritize renters and homeowners at risk of displacement,
- Ensure freedom from housing discrimination,
- Expand opportunities and housing options for those in disinvested neighborhoods, and

- Build a future where all neighborhoods allow communities to thrive.

Submitting comments to proposed regulatory changes is NOT considered lobbying. Private foundations can provide comments in response to this proposed rule, and public charities, like community foundations, can do so [without tracking and reporting it as lobbying on their 990s](#).

In addition to submitting comments, philanthropy can help increase participation during the public comment period by sharing this information and building a community analysis with grantees and partners. Other valuable resources for your grantees might include funding for policy analysis, writing, and convening as well as thought partnership and facilitation. If our communities have the time to understand the challenge and opportunity at hand, we'll be better positioned to ensure accountability and progress when it comes to implementing the AFFH this year.

If you need assistance or if your community has already surfaced valuable data and information about the need to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, [please reach out](#). We're looking forward to moving this forward together!

Focusing on the Long-Term Vision: Practicing Accountability as Encampment Raids Continue

Earlier this month, [the National Coalition for Housing Justice \(NCHJ\) sent letters](#) to both the Biden-Harris administration and the Bowser administration urging each to stop plans to evict residents from McPherson Square. In addition, we offered to convene stakeholders, including residents in McPherson Square and local philanthropy, to develop a plan for both this encampment and to address the systemic issues at play more broadly. Both administrations turned down those offers and we were told the raids would continue as planned.

Last week, Funders Together staff members and partners in the National Coalition for Housing Justice leaned into our values by being present and active at McPherson Square in Washington, D.C. on February 15 to observe and support McPherson Square residents and local service providers as the encampment raid took place.

Local advocates and the National Coalition for Housing Justice are continuing to call for humane and dignifying services for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Washington, DC, following the [National Park Service raid on McPherson Square](#) earlier this month. Of those **nearly 70** individuals who were evicted from the longstanding encampment, only **2** now have housing while others reestablish outreach connections and find new areas to sleep in the city. This process and practice violates the practices recommended in All In: the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

We hold many concerns for those who are most impacted by the raids, and also for communities who are looking to our federal partners for guidance around unsheltered homelessness. And we know our work as housing justice advocates continues. As we engage with our NCHJ partners in next steps around action, we are grappling with how we

move forward with practicing accountability - both with ourselves and our federal partners at this moment.

As we continue our advocacy, we call on philanthropy to meet this moment with us, to stand up against policing people experiencing homelessness unjustly, to oppose encampment raids however you can, to offer resources to avoid these raids, and to call out the racist dog whistling that underlie the NIMBY calls to “clean up” streets in our communities. This is just one part of the journey to transformational change, and one that has both immediate and long-term impacts for our unhoused neighbors.

Policy Resource Round-Up

- **McPherson Square Media Coverage:**
 - [Prior to McPherson Encampment Clearing, D.C. Officials Twice Refused Offers of Aid from National Homeless Advocates](#)
 - [Encampment sweeps aren't about ending homelessness](#)
 - [Biden Administration Defies Own Playbook on Homelessness](#)
 - [‘It's Inhumane’: McPherson Square Homeless Encampment Cleared, Leaving Some Residents With Nowhere To Go](#)
- **Funders Together:**
 - [Letter to California Governor Gavin Newsom on Need for a Permanent Revenue Source for Housing Justice](#)
 - [AFFH Proposed Rule Action Resources for Philanthropy](#)
 - [Funder Call: AFFH Proposed Rule and Immediate Actions for Philanthropy](#)
- **National Low Income Housing Coalition:**
 - Preliminary Highlights of [Five Positive Overarching Features of the Proposed AFFH Rule](#)
- **PolicyLink:**
 - [AFFH Public Comment Guide](#)
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development:**
 - [AFFH Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#)

As always, we are here to answer your questions or provide insights on public policy developments and opportunities. Please reach out to me or [Amanda](#) at any time.

Lauren Bennett

Director of Communications and Policy

[Funders Together to End Homelessness](#)

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