

AN AFFORDABLE HOME FOR EVERY IDAHOAN: A STATE AND FEDERAL ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



Table of Contents

- Introduction 3
- Ensuring Every Idahoan Lives in an Affordable Home 4
- Idaho Asset Building Network’s Policy Agenda. 5
- The Legacy of Federal Housing Policies and Racial Discrimination 6
- Helpful Race Equity Terms 7
- Advancing Equitable Policies through Advocacy 8
- Nonprofits and Lobbying. 9
- Idaho Legislative Process. 10
- Participating in State Advocacy. 12
- Participating in Federal Advocacy 14
- Elevating Equitable Policy Solutions with Idaho’s Elected Officials 16
- Conveying Equity and Values-Based Messaging with Elected Officials 20
- Speaking about Affordable Homes and Communities: 22
- Multi-Sector Talking Points. 22



Introduction

The Idaho Asset Building Network created this advocacy toolkit to support and empower Idahoans striving to be passionate advocates for affordable homes. This toolkit provides the materials and knowledge needed to actively advocate at the state and federal level for equitable, long-term policy solutions that promote housing stability throughout Idaho.

The Idaho Asset Building Network

Every Idahoan, deserves access to an affordable home in neighborhoods free from discrimination where everyone has equitable opportunities to thrive. The Idaho Asset Building Network champions policies that empower families to achieve long-term financial security by making affordable homes accessible to all Idahoans and breaking down racial barriers to housing. We engage in this advocacy work by connecting leaders, service providers, businesses, and consumers that represent multiple sectors and perspectives across our beautiful state.

An Affordable Home for Every Idahoan

The homes we live in impact every part of our lives. Idaho renters, including children and families, living in affordable homes and in high-opportunity neighborhoods with low-poverty, quality schools, and low-crime enjoy greater health and educational outcomes, better mental and physical well-being, and are more likely to climb the economic ladder. Affordable homes contribute to broad, positive impacts on families, seniors, people with disabilities, local economies, and our communities.

A home is affordable when a family pays no more than 30 percent of their income on rent. Families spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent experience housing cost-burden and likely struggle to afford the basic necessities that keep their families happy and healthy.

Today, Idaho families are struggling to find affordable places to live due to rapidly increasing rental prices outpacing wage growth and a statewide shortage of affordable homes. Bold reforms and investments in long-term housing solutions at the state and federal level are needed now more than ever to ensure Idahoans can remain safely and stably housed.

Idahoans of color face more barriers to living in affordable homes and achieving housing stability than white renters. These barriers are the result of centuries of policy decisions that consistently and systemically denied people of color access to opportunities enjoyed by white people, such as educational advancement, economic mobility, financial security, health services, and fair housing. In order to ensure every Idahoan has access to an affordable home, it is critical that the policies we advance as advocates actively combat and dismantle the legacy of racist policies and correct long-standing racial inequities and economic injustices that perpetuate disparities in housing.

Together, we can elevate and advance policies that ensure every Idahoan has the opportunity to live in an affordable home and thrive!



Ensuring Every Idahoan Lives in an Affordable Home

Affordable Homes Are Key to Thriving Families and Communities

Affordable homes are critical to achieving financial self-sufficiency and stability. Children who live in safe, quality affordable homes enjoy better health and educational outcomes and better mental and physical well-being. Affordable homes also contribute to broad, positive impacts on families, seniors, Idahoans with disabilities, and our communities.

A home is affordable when it comprises no more than 30% of the family's income. Families that spend more than 30% of their budget on housing experience housing cost-burden, and families that spend more than 50% of their budget on housing experience severe cost-burden.

Rent is Rising Faster than Wage Growth

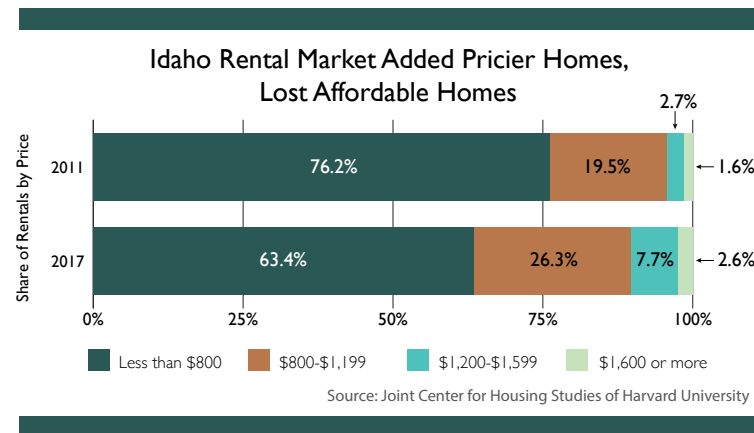
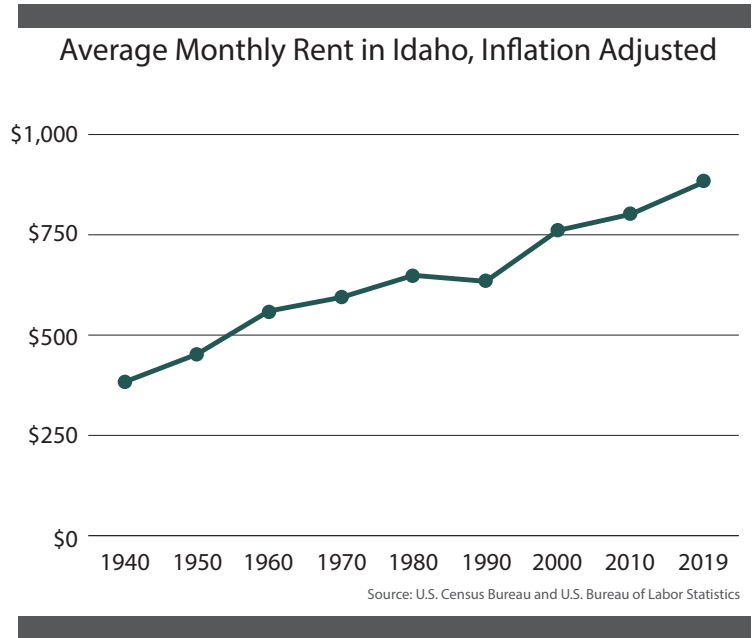
A shortage of affordable homes combined with rapidly increasing rent prices and stagnant wage growth are making it more difficult for Idaho renters to find affordable and available places to live. Over the course of the last three decades, Idaho rents grew three times faster than renters' household incomes when accounting for inflation – making it difficult for Idaho renters to keep up. Last year, half of all Idaho renters paid more than a third of their income for rent.

Affordable Homes are Harder to Find

Housing development choices made in Idaho during the past three decades have prioritized the development of more expensive homes. As a result, the number of higher-priced rental homes increased dramatically. Idaho gained nearly 56,000 low or modest-income households since 1990, but only 7,000 rental homes affordable at these income levels were added during that same timeframe. Last year, there were only two affordable homes available for every three Idaho households with modest incomes.

Unaffordable Housing Harms Families and Communities

Ensuring homes are affordable is key to ensuring the long-term health and financial stability of Idaho's families. When the cost of a home is unaffordable, families can experience many different negative consequences. A family may be forced to sacrifice or postpone other necessary expenses – such as going to medical appointments, purchasing nutritious food, or buying school supplies – that can have long-lasting impacts on a family's future. Families may also lose their home, which pushes families deeper into poverty and hurts communities. An analysis of homelessness in Ada County found that stably housing 100 chronically homeless Idahoans would save \$3.7 million in costs to the county and local hospitals.



Idaho Asset Building Network's Policy Agenda

Advocates can ensure every Idahoan has access to an affordable and safe home that's free from discrimination and where everyone has equitable opportunities to thrive by engaging in advocacy at the federal and state level. To achieve this goal, the Idaho Asset Building network lifts up the following policies with federal and state lawmakers.

State Policy Priorities

- **Activate the Unused Idaho Housing Trust Fund:** The Idaho Housing Trust Fund was created by the Idaho State Legislature in 1992 to support the development of affordable homes, but the program was never funded. State lawmakers can promote the creation of more affordable homes in Idaho by creating a funding and distribution mechanism for the Idaho Housing Trust Fund.
- **Enhance and Enforce Renter Protections:** Maximize protections for Idahoans at risk of eviction or homelessness as a result of rapidly increasing rents or unexpected expenses.
- **Dismantle Racist Housing Policies:** Roll back the legacy of racist housing policies in Idaho by supporting their removal and advancing policies that promote equitable outcomes in housing.
- **Ensure Equitable Pandemic Assistance and Recovery:** Ensure the efficient and equitable distribution of \$350 million in emergency rent and utility assistance allocated to Idaho in federal coronavirus relief packages.

Federal Policy Priorities

- **Bridge the Gap between Rents and Incomes:** Increase the amount of funding to ensure all eligible households have access to a Housing Choice Voucher to access homes on the private market at affordable prices. Only one in four eligible households can currently access and use a housing voucher, and increasing the number of housing vouchers available to Idahoans will help more families and individuals facing housing instability find an affordable place to live.
- **Expand Stock of Affordable Homes:** Increase annual funding to the national Housing Trust Fund to promote the creation and maintenance of affordable homes nationwide. Access to additional capital through the national Housing Trust Fund will incentivize developers to build more affordable homes. As the HTF expands, newly built affordable units must be located in ways that foster racially and socially just and inclusive communities. At least \$45 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund is needed to ensure recovery as we economically recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Stabilize Households Experiencing Temporary Financial Shocks:** The creation of an Emergency Assistance Fund to provide financial assistance and housing stability services for families facing unexpected emergency costs would help families avert the downward spiral of housing instability, eviction, and homelessness.



The Legacy of Federal Housing Policies and Racial Discrimination

Before diving into housing advocacy and policy change, we first need to understand the historical background of how housing policies contributed to the creation and perpetuation of racial disparities in our country. The policies below are only a few that reveal how housing policies have historically and systematically enforced racial segregation, institutional racism, and structural racism.

New Deal's National Housing Act

The National Housing Act was created as part of the New Deal in 1933 to help American families access homes by subsidizing the development of new housing and making home loans more attainable to working families than ever before. However, these policies perpetuated housing segregation as builders mass produced subdivisions that were only accessible to white families and new lending policies discriminated against families of color. The legacy of that racism still impacts people of color to this day.



Redlining

The National Housing Act furthered housing segregation efforts by instituting discriminatory lending practices that refused to insure government backed mortgages in or near neighborhoods where the majority of residents were people of color – especially Black families. The term redlining has been used to define this discriminatory practice because racially or ethnically diverse areas were color-coded with red on maps to identify them as “credit risks” to lenders. As a result, loans to buy properties in redlined neighborhoods were either very expensive or impossible to receive. Green neighborhoods – the neighborhoods identified as lowest risk – often had racist covenants in place that prohibited homes being sold to people of color. Redlining also perpetuated other forms of segregation – such as segregation in education – and was used until it was banned by the Fair Housing Act in 1968.

Servicemen's Readjustment Act (GI Bill)

The GI Bill was approved in 1944 to provide generous home loans, business loans, education benefits, and job training benefits to veterans returning from World War II. While many white veterans had the opportunity to build and own a home with the help of low-interest mortgages made available through the GI Bill, Black veterans were systematically denied these benefits due to loopholes in the legislation and discriminatory business practices, such as redlining and racist housing covenants.

Wealth Gap

In addition to many other factors, the institutional racist barriers that prevented families of color from purchasing homes led to a significant wealth disparity between white and Black families. A major contributor to this wealth gap was the ability for white families to build wealth through equity in their homes and to pass that wealth on through inheritance. Black families barred from home ownership and other opportunities were unable to build similar wealth. As a result, the median wealth for a Black household in 2019 was \$24,100 and the median wealth for a white household was \$189,100.



Wage Gap

People of color disproportionately struggle to pay rent compared to white households, and people who struggle to pay rent are at higher risk of eviction, homelessness, and other negative life outcomes. A large part of this gap in economic security comes from persistent discrimination in the workforce. Even when people of color climb the ladder to higher professional positions, they still make less in wages compared to their equally qualified white colleagues. An average wage for a Black or Latino male is \$14 to \$15 compared to \$21 for a white male with the same job qualifications.

Zoning Practices

Decades of zoning practices sought to prevent people of color from moving to white neighborhoods and allowed toxic industrial facilities to be built in close proximity to Black and Brown neighborhoods. For example, exclusionary zoning practices barred families of color from moving into predominantly white neighborhoods by prohibiting the development of the homes most accessible to families of color due to other racist policies – such as multi-family units. The development of harmful industrial facilities in neighborhoods of color also contributed to disparities in health outcomes between white families and families of color.

Discrimination and Racism in Banking

People of color continue to be underserved and overcharged by financial institutions and products. Black and Latinx households make up 32 percent of the U.S. population, but represent 64 percent of the country's unbanked and 47 percent of its underbanked households. Households without bank accounts often turn to alternative financial institutions – such as payday lenders – that charge high interest rates and transaction fees. Households without bank accounts also have more difficulty building wealth with limited access to credit or investment opportunities.

Predatory lending practices aimed towards people of color fueled the mass foreclosure crisis in 2008. The disproportionately high rate of subprime loans held by people of color also widened the racial wealth gap as people of color paid the cost of discriminatory lending practices.

Discrimination in Housing

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the sale and rental of housing based on a person's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or familial status. Despite these protections, evidence shows that real estate agents today often guide prospective home buyers into certain neighborhoods based on their race, and Hispanic and Asian renters are shown fewer available units compared to equally qualified white renters. Homes owned by people of color consistently receive lower appraisal values than homes of the same size and quality owned by white homeowners, which limits homeowners of color from realizing the full benefits of building equity and wealth through homeownership.



Helpful Race Equity Terms

Equity Terms

- **Discrimination:** Discrimination is prejudicial treatment based on a wide range of characteristics; including race, ethnicity, income, disability, religion, LGBTQIA+ status, gender, and other characteristics that have been associated with exclusion or marginalization.
- **Disparity:** A difference in experience, treatment, or outcome. Racial disparities are differences in outcomes based on race (i.e., one racial group is worse off than another racial group).
- **Equality:** Giving each individual or group the same resources and opportunities without recognizing that people need different resources to fully achieve an equal opportunity to others. In other words, to reach equality as an outcome, the causes of inequity within major issues needs to be addressed.
- **Equity:** The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.
- **Inequity:** A general disparity that reflects injustices often at the expense of marginalized populations is an inequity.
- **Marginalized Groups:** Those who have suffered discrimination or been excluded from society and the health-promoting resources it has to offer are considered part of marginalized groups. Marginalized groups are economically and/or socially disadvantaged.
- **Race:** Race is a socially-constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features, such as skin color and ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories. The ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions, and cultures and is used as a basis for discrimination and domination.
- **Racism:** Racism refers to prejudicial treatment based on racial or ethnic group and the societal institutions or structures that perpetuate this unfair treatment. Racism can be expressed on interpersonal, structural/institutional, or internalized levels.



Types of Racism

- **Interpersonal Racism:** An individual performing an act of harassment, exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, hate, or violence towards another group.
- **Institutional Racism:** Institutional racism operates both systemically and without the need for individual racist acts. Simply following institutionalized rules can produce outcomes that harm people of color because the rules are set up to reproduce racism.
- **Structural Racism:** The cumulative impact of interpersonal and institutional racism within our society creates a system of structural racism. The racism of different institutions overlaps, reinforces, and amplifies the different treatment that people of color receive – ensuring different life outcomes.

Advancing Equitable Policies through Advocacy



Advocacy plays an important role in policy change and can positively impact the broad priorities and individual decisions of Idaho's lawmakers. Advocacy is about speaking up for the individuals and communities you serve to ensure all voices are heard in the policy making process. Elevating the voices of impacted individuals encourages lawmakers to advance equitable policies that promote the safety, health, and well-being of all and remove systemic barriers to ensure every Idahoan has the opportunity to thrive. This section will provide a brief overview of policy advocacy, information about the legislative process, and tips for elevating equitable policy solutions through advocacy in Idaho.

Advocacy and Policy Terms

- **Advocacy:** Broad term used to describe attempts to influence decision-making systems.
- **Constituents:** The members served by an elected official or organization and/or those who will be impacted by a particular advocacy or other organizing outcome.
- **Empowerment:** The process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.
- **Executive Branch:** The branch of government with administrative authority. The federal executive branch consists of the president and federal agencies, and the state executive branch consists of the Governor and state agencies.
- **Grassroots Organizing or Collective Impact:** Collaboration across government, businesses, non-profits, and citizens to achieve social change.
- **Legislative Branch:** The branch of government responsible for making laws and allocating public funds. The federal legislative branch is collectively known as "Congress" and includes the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. The Idaho legislative branch is collectively known as the "Idaho State Legislature" and includes the Idaho Senate and Idaho House of Representatives.
- **Legislative Process:** The rules, ethics, and customs that constitute the decision-making process. The process is the journey of a bill from introduction in a legislative body until failed or passed into law.
- **Lobbying:** A specific advocacy process of influencing public policy at federal, state, and local levels; can be referring to as direct or grassroots lobbying.
- **Public Policy:** Decisions we make at every level of government that direct how we will care for one another, our communities, and the land.
- **Social Change:** The transformation of culture, values, norms, and social institutions over time.
- **Stakeholder:** A person, group, organization, or system that affects or can be affected by an advocacy or organizing action.
- **Target/Target Audience:** The person or people to whom an organization is advocating or trying to address through their advocacy efforts.

Nonprofits and Lobbying

Much advocacy work, including efforts to influence executive branch decisions, does not constitute lobbying. Yet, contrary to popular misconception, 501(c)(3) public charities – including houses of worship and public foundations – can lobby. In fact, the Internal Revenue Service has stated that public charities “may lobby freely” so long as lobbying is within generous specified limits

You can check out the following resources from Bolder Advocacy to learn more about whether your organization can participate in lobbying activities.

<https://bolderadvocacy.org/resource-library/types-of-organizations>

Understanding Types of Lobbying

In order for an action to be considered lobbying or grassroots lobbying, it must contain all of the below elements. It is not lobbying if one or more of the required elements is missing.

- **Direct Lobbying:** Communication with a legislator that expresses a view about specific legislation.
- **Grassroots Lobbying:** Communication with the public that expresses a view about specific legislation and includes a call to action.

You can use this flow-chart from Bolder Advocacy to help you determine if your advocacy actions are direct lobbying, grassroots lobbying, or not lobbying.

<https://bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Lobbying-Flowchart.pdf>

Activities that are NOT Lobbying

- Nonpartisan analysis, study, or research that presents all sides of an issue.
- Responses to written requests for assistance from a committee or other legislative body - not an individual legislator. The communication must be made available to all members of the requesting body.
- Challenges to or support for legislative proposals that would change the organization’s rights or its right to exist. The communication must be with a legislative body regarding possible actions of that body which could affect the organization’s existence, powers, duties, tax-exempt status, or the deductibility of contributions to the organization.
- Examinations and discussions of broad social, economic, and similar problems. Communications on general topics which are also the subject of specific legislation must not refer to specific legislation or directly encourage the recipients to take action.



Idaho Legislative Process

Laws in Idaho must be created or changed through the legislative process. A bill can originate in either the House or the Senate and be introduced by a legislator, a group of legislators, a standing legislative committee, or the Governor. Once a proposal becomes a bill, it will travel through the legislative process - where it can be amended, approved, killed, or remain unconsidered. A bill must be approved by both chambers and the Governor in order for the bill to become law. The following page includes a flow chart of the process.

The Legislative Session begins every year on the Monday closest to the 9th of January. During the Legislative Session, both chambers convene daily to conduct the business of the Legislature. It is only during these daily sessions that bills can be introduced, assigned to committee, amended, debated, or voted on by the full body. Legislative leadership will also use this time to make announcements, hold special ceremonies, or read messages from the Governor or other chamber. The Legislature will adjourn until a specified time when they reach the end of daily business, and the Legislative Session ends when both chambers vote to adjourn Sine Die – or indefinitely.

Presiding Officers

The presiding officer in the Senate is the President of the Senate (President). This role is held by the Lieutenant Governor, which is an elected position that serves four-year terms.

The presiding officer in the House of Representatives is the Speaker of the House (Speaker). The Speaker is a Representative elected to the position by the full House membership.

Legislative Committees

The Idaho Senate has 10 standing and joint standing committees, and the Idaho House of Representatives has 14. Committee assignments are recommended by the party leaders in each chamber, and then confirmed by the presiding officer. The presiding officer also assigns a chairperson from the majority party to each committee. The chairperson has the authority to decide how their committee will be run and which bills the committee will consider.

A significant amount of advocacy efforts are directed toward committees due to the narrowed focus of committee work, the concentrated power committees have to decide whether a bill will advance, and the responsibility entrusted to committees to gather and share public input.

Standing Committees: Each chamber has their own standing committees responsible for considering specific issues. Committees do their work by holding print and bill hearings, hearing public testimony, and approving administrative rules.

Joint Standing Committees: Joint standing committees are assigned members from each chamber that work collaboratively to advance committee business. The most active joint standing committee is the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC). JFAC is a powerful committee responsible for guiding the Legislature's appropriations decisions.



Introduction of Legislative Proposal

- A proposed bill is introduced with a Routing Slip number (“RS”) and referred by the presiding officer to the appropriate legislative committee. The committee will vote to decide if the RS will be introduced and printed as a bill during a short “print hearing.” This process only happens in the chamber of origin.

House/Senate Referral to Committee

- **First Reading:** The bill is read for the first time and referred by the presiding officer to the appropriate legislative committee. All bills must be read three times on the floor before it can be debated and voted on by the full body.

House/Senate Committee Hearing

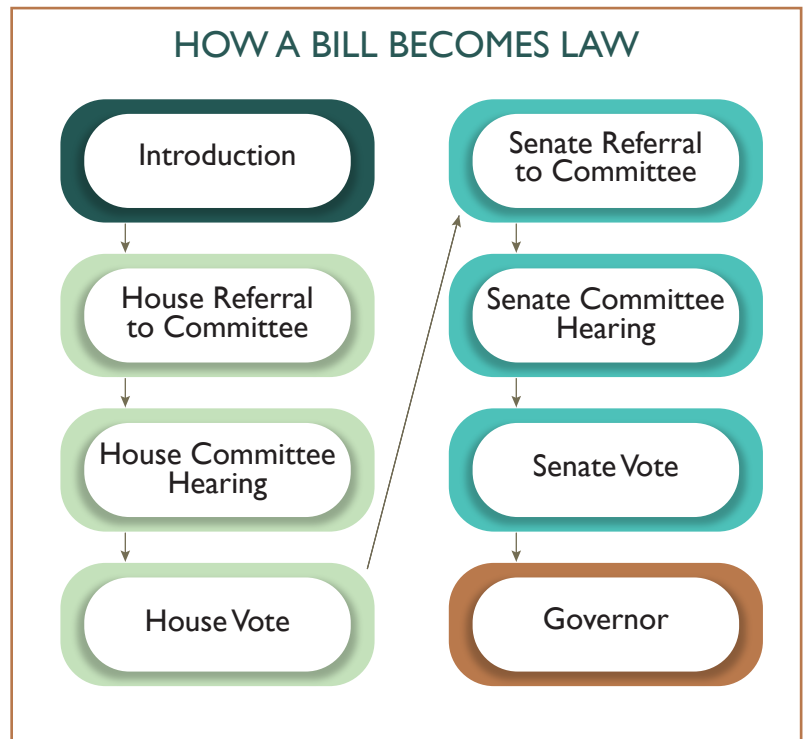
- **Reports of Standing Committees:** The committee will collect information about a bill to inform their recommendation. This information is collected through methods such as a presentation from the bill sponsor, public testimony and input, and research. The committee will then vote to approve and advance the bill or hold it in committee. The bill must be approved by a majority vote to move forward.
- **Public Testimony:** Public testimony is accepted during the committee hearing; it can be done in person, in writing, and sometimes virtually.

House/Senate Vote

- **Second Reading:** The bill is reported out of committee and is read on the floor for a second time. The bill automatically advances to the third reading calendar the following legislative day.
- **Third Reading:** The bill may be debated and receive a final vote after being read for a third time. Bills approved by majority vote are sent to the opposite chamber.
- **Next Steps:**
 - Bills received by a chamber for the first time will advance to the first reading calendar and repeat the process above.
 - If the bill was amended since passing the chamber of origin, the chamber of origin must vote to concur – or agree – with the amendments. The bill is sent to the Governor for signature after the vote to concur is successful.
 - Bills returning to their chamber of origin after being approved by both chambers are sent to the Governor for signature.

Governor

- **After a bill passes both chambers the Governor may:**
 - Sign the bill into law within 5 days of its approval during the Legislative Session or 10 days after the end of session (excluding Sundays).
 - Allow the bill to become law without their approval by not signing it within the time allotted above.
 - Veto the bill within the time allotted above and return it to the chamber of origin. The Legislature can override a veto by achieving a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers.



Participating in State Advocacy

THE IDAHO STATE LEGISLATURE

The Idaho Legislature is responsible for writing laws and setting Idaho's annual state budget. The state is divided into 35 legislative districts and each district has two representatives and one senator to represent them. House and Senate members both serve two-year terms and have no term limits. The Idaho Legislature is a part-time "citizen assembly," which means most legislators have other jobs outside of being a legislator and spend the majority of their time living and working in their home districts. Legislators are often readily available and happy to meet with the constituents they represent.

Participating in the Idaho Legislative Process

The Idaho State Legislature's website is the best source of information about current and past legislative sessions and provides the most up-to-date information about the Legislature's daily business.

Check out the Legislature's session information page to access the bill center, upcoming committee agendas, daily reading calendars, video archives of past meetings, and more: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/>

In-Person Participation: All legislative session and committee meetings are open to the public. The Senate and House chambers are both located on the third floor of the Capitol and have public viewing galleries. Committee meeting room numbers and times can be found on the Legislative website or on the committee agendas.

Virtual Participation: Idaho Public Television streams all legislative meetings live on their website. You can reference committee agendas to identify the correct meeting room link and watch the live stream here:

<https://www.idahoptv.org/shows/idahoinsession/Legislature/>

Testifying: In addition to individual outreach with legislators, advocates can also publicly share their position on a piece of legislation by testifying during the bill's committee hearing. Check out the "Elevating Equitable Policies" section below to learn more about this process.

Key Legislative Committees: Housing legislation is usually introduced in the following two committees:

- Senate Judiciary and Rules Committee
- House Judiciary, Rules, and Administration Committee.

Idaho State Legislature's Contact Information

You can use this link to help you identify the legislators that represent you and find their contact information:

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/legislators/whosmylegislator/>

Address:

Idaho State Capitol
700 W Jefferson Street
Boise, ID 83702



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

The Governor oversees the executive branch of Idaho and is responsible for overseeing Idaho's state agencies tasked with providing public assistance and services to Idahoans. The Governor works full-time from the Idaho State Capitol building in Boise and has a dedicated staff to inform his policy decisions and help address constituent concerns. The Governor is elected to serve four-year terms, and the number of terms a Governor can serve are not limited.

The current Governor of Idaho is Brad Little.

Governor's Office Advocacy

It is common for advocates to interact primarily with the Governor's staff member(s) responsible for handling housing issues on behalf of the Governor, and it is beneficial for advocates to develop professional connections with these staffers. Contrary to the Governor - who often juggles many meetings and policy discussions each day - staffers can generally dedicate more time to meet with advocates, are often well-informed in their specific policy areas, and can be valuable resources for policy advocates.

Governor's Office Advocacy during the Legislative Session

Advocates can reach out to the Governor and his staff personally or encourage others to contact the Governor's Office to share their position on bills approved by both chambers. Legislation sent to the Governor's Office and the action taken by the Governor can be tracked on the Governor's website under the "Legislative Session" tab.

Governor's Proclamation

Advocates can submit a request for the Governor to issue an official proclamation elevating a particular issue, project, or program. If approved, the Governor can also be invited to participate in a public proclamation signing ceremony. Submission guidelines and forms for proclamation requests can be found on the Governor's website under the "Contact" tab.

Governor's Office Contact Information

Phone: (208) 334-2100

Website: gov.idaho.gov

Email: governor@gov.idaho.gov

Address:

Office of the Governor
700 W Jefferson Street
Boise, ID 83702



Idaho Gov. Brad Little

Participating in Federal Advocacy

IDAHO'S FEDERAL CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

Idaho's congressional delegation consists of two senators and two representatives that represent the interest of Idahoans in Congress. Due to the nature of their work, Idaho's congressional delegation spends the majority of their time in Washington D.C. Members of Congress employ full-time staff to inform their policy decisions and address constituent concerns, and it is common for advocates to interact with relevant staff members in place of their elected officials.

Advocacy at the federal level looks different from state level advocacy in many ways. One of the main differences is that Congress is full-time and meets all year. As a result, federal legislation can be introduced throughout the year and negotiations often take weeks or months. This means that there is far more flexibility and opportunities to advocate at the federal level.



Budget Setting Process

Advocates have many excellent opportunities to participate in federal advocacy annually during the budget setting process to ensure housing programs receive robust funding.

The President releases their budget request for the upcoming fiscal year in February. Advocates can engage with their members of Congress as the two chambers work together during the spring to approve a budget resolution that establishes the maximum amount of funding that can be appropriated. Once the budget resolution is approved, advocates can reach out again as congressional committees begin the appropriations process to determine how much funding each agency and program will receive. Congress must approve an appropriations bill or a continuing resolution by October 1st to avoid a government shutdown.

Outreach During Congressional Recesses

Throughout the year, Congress takes recess periods where they can return from the U.S. Capitol to their home states. These recesses enable advocates to interact with their members of Congress face to face without having to travel to Washington, D.C. This is a perfect time to invite them to participate in meetings, celebrations, roundtables, or other events.

Additional Resources for Federal Advocacy

The National Low Income Housing Coalition's Advocates' Guide is an excellent resource to learn more about advocating for affordable homes at the federal level: <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/publications-research/advocates-guide>

Key Congressional Committees

The following are key housing authorizing and appropriating committees in Congress:

- The House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services
- The House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
- The House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means
- The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- The Senate Committee on Appropriations
- The Senate Committee on Finance

Committees of the U.S Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/committees/>

Committees of the U.S Congress: <https://www.congress.gov/committees>

Congressional Delegation Contact Information



U.S. Senator Mike Crapo

Phone: (208) 334-1776

Website:

<https://www.crapo.senate.gov/>

Email:

<https://www.crapo.senate.gov/contact/email-me>

Mailing Address:

U.S. Senator Mike Crapo
251 East Front Street
Suite 205
Boise, ID 83702



U.S. Senator James E. Risch

Phone: 208-342-7985

Website:

<https://www.risch.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/>

Email:

<https://www.risch.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email>

Mailing Address:

U.S. Senator James E. Risch
350 N. 9th St., Suite 302
Boise, Idaho 83702 U.S.



Congressman Mike Simpson

Phone: 208-334-1953

Website:

<https://simpson.house.gov/>

Email:

<https://simpson.house.gov/contact/>

Mailing Address:

U.S. Representative Mike Simpson
802 West Bannock
Suite 600
Boise, ID 83702



Congressman Russ Fulcher

Phone: (208) 888-3188

Website:

<https://fulcher.house.gov/>

Email:

<https://fulcher.house.gov/email-me>

Mailing Address:

U.S. Representative Russ Fulcher
33 East Broadway Avenue, Suite 251
Meridian, ID 83642

Elevating Equitable Policy Solutions with Idaho's Elected Officials

Idaho's lawmakers want to hear from Idahoans and often make themselves readily available to hear the concerns and ideas of their constituents. Below is a guide on how advocates can share their concerns and elevate equitable policy solutions with Idaho's elected officials.

Ways to Engage Directly with Idaho's Elected Officials

Testify during a Committee Bill Hearing – State Advocacy Only

Idaho's legislative committees invite Idahoans to share their opinions on bills being advanced by the Idaho State Legislature during committee bill hearings. The committee chairperson decides who will have the opportunity to testify and for how long. Members of the public can usually plan to speak for at least two minutes, but testimony may be limited to as little as one minute if there are many folks signed up to testify or time is tight.

Advocates wishing to testify in person can sign-up by adding their name to the sign-in sheet that is located inside the committee room door. Some committees permit Idahoans to testify virtually or to sign-up to testify in person ahead of time. You can determine if these options are available to you on the Idaho Legislature's website by checking the "Testimony Registration" tab on the committee's web page.

Tips for Crafting a Successful Public Testimony

- Prepare and practice your testimony ahead of time to help relieve some nerves and ensure you are hitting all the points you wanted to make.
- Be prepared to calmly and effectively testify under shortened time constraints by identifying your most important and impactful talking points ahead of time.
- State your name, city or county, and any other affiliation you may have before beginning your testimony.
- Begin your comments with a brief introduction of yourself and the organization or individuals you represent.
- Be clear about your position on the bill and keep your talking points concise. It is helpful to include data and relevant information or experiences to back up your position.
- Make sure your testimony specifically discusses the piece of legislation the committee is considering. The chairperson will not allow testimony that is off-topic or irrelevant.
- End your testimony by thanking the committee members for the opportunity to testify and offer to answer questions.



Tips for Giving a Successful Public Testimony

- Address committee members formally and respectfully. For example:
 - Chairman Chaney
 - Senator Lee
 - Representative Hartgen
- All interactions between members of the committee and the public must be directed through the committee chairperson. Always respond to questions through the chair. For example:
 - Testimony introduction: "Mister/Madame Chairperson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today."
 - Answering a question from Representative Amador: "Mister/Madame Chairperson, Representative Amador, that's an excellent question."
- Bring a couple hard copies of your testimony with you. Your written comments can help guide your testimony, and the committee secretary will often ask to be given a copy to submit into the public record when you are done. On rarer occasions, Governor's staff members, legislative attaches, or members of the media may also request a copy.

Schedule an In-Person or Virtual Meeting

Meeting with your lawmakers directly is one of the most effective ways to engage with your elected officials and provides you with an opportunity to share your concerns, stories, and proposed policy solutions in a personal setting. You can schedule a meeting with your lawmaker by reaching out by phone or email and identifying yourself as a constituent. When timing permits, requests for a meeting should be sent about four weeks in advance.

State lawmaker schedules can be very busy and fluid during legislative session, so it's important to be prepared for shortened meeting times and last-minute requests to cancel or re-schedule.

Tips for a Successful Meeting

- Prepare for the meeting by establishing your meeting goals, an organized and prioritized list of what you would like to discuss with your lawmaker, and a clear request for action. Be aware of how much time you have for the meeting and adjust your talking points accordingly.
- Take the time to introduce meeting participants and organizations to help the lawmakers and staff members you are meeting with better understand your unique perspectives and expertise.
- Unless you have spoken before, always take a few minutes to clearly and concisely explain the challenges you are there to discuss. Although lawmakers and staffers are often well-informed, advocates should never assume that the folks they are meeting with are familiar with a specific problem or policy.
- Follow-up is an incredibly important component of advancing your advocacy efforts and developing professional relationships with lawmakers and their staff. Your follow-up should include your thanks for the opportunity to meet, a brief overview of your priorities and request(s), and any additional information that may have been discussed or requested during the meeting.



Write a Letter or Email

Due to the busy schedules of advocates and lawmakers, scheduling a meeting is not always possible. Sending a letter or email to your lawmaker is an effective and efficient way to ensure your voice and the voices of those you represent are heard.

Tips for a Successful Letter or Email

- Keep your message clear, concise, and respectful. Lawmakers often receive hundreds of letters and emails per day, and many state legislators do not have staff to help with administrative tasks.
- Include the appropriate bill number when referencing a piece of legislation.
- Copy or send messages directly to relevant staff members when possible to increase your chance of receiving a timely response.

Additional Tips for a Successful Email

- Advise folks to personalize their messages when encouraging other advocates or networks to send an email using a template provided to them. Too many identical emails can lead to emails being flagged or blocked by network spam filters.
- Keep file names for attachments simple and avoid using special characters. Unusual or long file names and file names with too many special characters can lead to emails being flagged or blocked by network spam filters.

Additional Tips for a Successful Letter

- Include your return address and/or other preferred contact information to increase the likelihood of receiving a response.
- Take care to use tidy and legible handwriting when sending a hand written letter.
- Due to increased security measures and screening practices, it is recommended that advocates do not send time-sensitive communications to members of Congress via mail.

Make a Phone Call

Contacting lawmakers by phone is an effective and easy outreach strategy that takes little time to do. Phone calls can be especially effective when there is a small window for public input or a lawmaker is receiving multiple calls about the same issue.

Tips for a Successful Phone Call

- Prepare 2-3 main talking points ahead of time to help you stay focused during the call.
- Identify yourself as a constituent, where you are from, and the bill number or name you are speaking about.
- Speak clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard. Many staffers responsible for answering the phones work in shared spaces that may be noisy or distracting.
- The most effective time to call is days before a key vote or hearing.
- Be thoughtful about the time of day when calling an Idaho state legislator. Many legislators list their home or cell phone numbers in their contact information, and calling after business hours may interrupt a meal or bed time.
- To demonstrate widespread interest about a specific issue, encourage other folks in your network to call during a similar time frame. It is often helpful to share talking points with folks to help them quickly and easily craft their message.

Attend a Town Hall or Public Forum

Many of Idaho's lawmakers host town hall meetings in their districts throughout the year. These forums give lawmakers the opportunity to hear from their constituents on topics of interest or to discuss upcoming legislation. You can stay up to date on local town hall meetings by signing-up for lawmaker newsletters or checking local event calendars for your area.

Tips for Successful Participation in a Public Forum

- Prepare the concern you would like to share or the question you would like to ask in advance. There are often many people who wish to speak at one of these events, so it is recommended that your remarks be clear and concise.
- If your concern will require follow-up after the event, it is helpful to have a written copy of your concerns and contact information prepared to share with the elected official or their staff. The written copy can also include supplemental information that was referenced or too long to include in your spoken remarks.
- If you have multiple questions you would like to ask, arrange them in a list in order of priority. Elected officials may limit participants to only one or two questions at busier events.



Elevate Your Message Publicly

Social Media

Social media is a very effective tool when the goal is to share information with a broad audience. Messages can be elevated by sharing relevant articles or providing clear calls to action for the audience to take – such as sending an email to an elected official or signing a petition.

Author an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

Guest opinions (op-eds) and letters to the Editor (LTE's) are excellent ways to keep your issue on the news and give you the opportunity to share your message with a broad audience. They are also a good venue to thank elected officials and other community leaders for their support.

It is preferable to have an op-ed placed because they are generally given a more prominent placement and are allowed a longer word count than an LTE. However, op-eds are also more difficult to have published.



Tips for a Successful Op-Ed

- Press cycles can move quickly, and so you want to make sure to submit your piece while the issue is still ripe in the eyes of the media.
- Op-eds can be used to bring awareness to an issue and to call others to action. The op-ed can include information about what policy decisions could be made to address the issue and encourage readers to contact the relevant lawmakers to support those actions.
- Having the right author is key to getting an op-ed placed. An expert on the subject, someone with a unique perspective on an issue, a prominent figure in the community, or an impacted individual will have a better chance of getting an op-ed successfully placed.
- Editors are unlikely to run the same guest opinion subject twice. Look at previous guest opinions to see what has already been covered in a publication and consider what new perspective you can share.
- Submission requirements and processes can be found on the media outlet's website and should be checked beforehand. Most publications have a maximum word count of 500-600 words for an op-ed.
- Include a headshot and brief bio of the op-ed author with each submission.

Tips for a Successful LTE

- Write a brief outline of the main points you want to make before writing the letter to make sure your themes go together well.
- Check the word length requirement before writing your LTE. Most publications have a maximum word count of 200 words for an LTE.
- Proofread your letter before submitting.
- Do not use inflammatory language or engage in personal attacks.
- Keep it local.

Conveying Equity and Values-Based Messaging with Elected Officials

When it comes to speaking about the intersection between housing and race equity, focus should remain on ensuring equal access and opportunity for all Idahoans. Bringing voices of those impacted and their stories to the forefront help illustrate how racial disparities within our housing policies are damaging to Idaho as a whole. Being thoughtful about messaging and story sharing allows us to build bridges across a range of issues, including housing, education, healthcare, child welfare, and other spheres where opportunity is at risk.

Evoked Shared Values

Using the term, ‘opportunity,’ means that everyone has a fair chance to achieve their full potential as a human being. Ensuring that we all have a fair chance is an effective and basic principle shared by many elected officials and stakeholders across Idaho. Our government and institutions have an important responsibility to protect and expand opportunity for this and future generations.

Emphasize Opportunity for All

Communicating our concerns and goals in terms of the shared outcomes that connect us opens new conversations and moves us away from harmful framing of housing issues in terms of individualism, competition, and blame. Idahoans from all walks of life deserve equal and equitable opportunity to live in an affordable and safe home, and we can only thrive when we recognize and address the barriers to opportunity being experienced by members of our community.

Elevate the Voices of Impacted Individuals

Ensuring that individuals impacted by inequities, including people of color, are leading advocacy efforts and providing everyone with the opportunity to share their story will help underline the real-life ramifications of systemic racism and structural barriers for underrepresented communities. Listening to these stories and engaging in conversations led by people of color will highlight solutions and next steps for housing advocacy.

Put People First

Using “People-First Language” is a powerful messaging tool that can shape people’s perceptions of others by putting personhood at the center and considers all other descriptive social identities as secondary or non-essential. For example, using language such as “people experiencing homelessness” instead of “homeless people” brings the focus to the individual and their experience instead of relying on a broad impersonal term often associated with harmful stereotypes.

Convey an Aspirational and Optimistic Outlook

Hope and optimism are more motivating than cynicism. When we suggest in our messaging that reaching a goal may be difficult, elected officials may use that language as permission to ignore the issue.



Education of Racial Inequities

Providing historical context about institutional racism and barriers can play a powerful role in dismantling stereotypes and overcoming biases held by your audience. Take the opportunity to frame the disproportionate impacts that the legacy of racist housing policies has had on people of color and how modern policies and practices still continue to exacerbate racial inequalities. Review page 6 of this advocacy toolkit for further information on the history of housing policies and racial discrimination.

CREATE YOUR MESSAGE

This work sheet will help guide you in creating your message and putting the information and tips from the messaging guide into action.

Values	Why are you doing this work? Why do affordable homes matter to you?
Audience	Who is your audience (lawmakers, citizens of Kootenai County, other advocates, etc.)? What shared values connect you and your audience? Always consider how your description will work with a specific audience.
Opening	What is your hook to catch the audience's attention and interest? Drawing upon your shared values with the audience, why should all Idahoans care about affordable homes?
Problem	Define the problem in clear and simple terms that illustrate the impact Idaho's housing landscape has on all individuals, including communities of color. How has the legacy of racist policies disproportionately affected people of color? Identify the barriers preventing all Idahoans from accessing affordable homes. You can even include a story.
Solution	You can refer to IABN's policy priorities page above to identify proven policy solutions for addressing Idaho's housing needs. What are some clear and equitable solutions to the problem? How do your solutions create opportunity for all? How do your solutions correct racial disparities and create opportunity for all?
Action	What is your ask to the audience? How can they engage, assist and support your work? How can the voices of impacted individuals be included and elevated in this process?

Speaking about Affordable Homes and Communities: Multi-Sector Talking Points

Few things impact our lives and the lives of our families more than our homes. Due to the intersectional nature of housing, the multi-sector perspective is very important and impactful when talking with lawmakers about the need for more affordable homes. Research shows that the homes people live in affect a family's access to equitable education, health services, and nutritious food. Additionally, fostering an economically and racially diverse neighborhood is possible when affordable homes are geographically spread out throughout cities.

Education & Housing

Stable, affordable homes drive stronger student outcomes and support equitable education gains. Ensuring every child can receive a quality education from local public schools is one of the most important ways we build thriving communities, and disparities in housing leads to disparities in education outcomes.

Talking Points:

- Affordable homes are linked to students having improved test scores and fewer behavior problems. Students in affordable homes are also less likely to drop out, be suspended, or be held back and have an increased chance to graduate.
- Children lacking access to affordable housing are twice as likely to have a learning disability.
- The number of Idaho students experiencing homelessness increased from 4,758 students to 7,820 students in the last 10 years.
- Twenty-nine percent of Latino children in Idaho live in households with modest incomes, compared to eleven percent of white children. This disparity creates a major gap in education quality and outcomes between Latino and white children.



Health & Housing

Affordable homes are strongly linked to better health outcomes. When Idaho families lack access to affordable housing, they often struggle to afford other basic necessities such as health insurance, medical visits, and medication. These financial barriers may lead to families foregoing essential preventive care, which increases the potential need for expensive emergent care and late diagnosis of serious health concerns.

Talking Points:

- Children who lack stable affordable housing are twenty percent more likely to be hospitalized than their peers who don't.
- Families living in unaffordable homes spend one fifth more on necessary health care compared to families in affordable homes.
- When communities have access to quality affordable homes, emergency room visits go down by 18 percent.
- Twenty-eight percent of occupied housing units in Idaho have at least one substandard condition such as: vermin, water leaks, inadequate cooling and heating systems, unsafe electricity, lack of indoor plumbing and more. These conditions pose a risk to the physical and mental health and well-being of adults and children in the home.
- Seniors living in affordable housing with supportive services are about half as likely to enter a nursing home and are less likely to go to the hospital compared to seniors who lack affordable housing.
- Families and children who live near waste sites and industrial facilities are more likely to be hospitalized for asthma. The rate goes up for children of color due to housing policies throughout history that have segregated people of color into neighborhoods near waste sites or permitted waste factories to be built near established neighborhoods of color.

Hunger & Housing

Rent eats first. Low wages and the shortage of affordable homes force families to spend a greater portion of their income on housing and leaves them with fewer spending opportunities for other crucial needs, such as food. The less a family has left over after paying bills, the less they have to buy nutritious food or food at all.

Talking Points:

- One in eight Idahoans are food insecure, meaning they don't have consistent access to sufficient, affordable, and nutritious food. High rent prices force many of these families to buy less food or purchase cheaper, less nutritious food.
- Idahoans in the most housing cost-burdened counties are twenty-five percent more likely to be food insecure than Idahoans in counties with less cost-burden.
- Between 2019 to 2020, 43 percent of children in Idaho were on the free/reduced lunch program, meaning they lived in households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level.
- Children who live in affordable homes are 52 percent less likely to be underweight and overall experience greater food security compared to children who live in cost-burden homes.
- Black and Latino households are two times more likely to experience food insecurity due to the racial wealth gap. This gap increases the chance of children and families in these households to suffer from obesity, diabetes, or heart disease as they are forced to choose between shelter or food.



Economic Mobility & Housing

Families with modest incomes are able to climb the income ladder when they have access to affordable homes in high opportunity neighborhoods. High opportunity neighborhoods increase access to quality education, higher paying jobs, public transportation, and other factors that often make homes in these areas unaffordable to average renters. Increasing access to homes in high opportunity areas for families with modest incomes will help families achieve financial self-sufficiency.

Talking Points:

- Increasing access to affordable homes in higher opportunity neighborhoods is shown to be the most effective approach to reducing childhood poverty in the U.S., as it breaks generational poverty and gives children the resources they need to climb the income ladder.
- Children who move to higher opportunity neighborhoods are 32 percent more likely to attend college, as they are able to attend schools with increased resources such as tutoring, testing preparation programs, after school programs, college readiness programs, etc.
- Children who move to lower poverty neighborhoods will earn an average of \$302,000 more over their lifetime compared to their peers in higher-poverty neighborhoods.
- Since 2015, many Idaho counties have been consistently below 1% in affordable rental vacancies, which limits housing choices for Idahoans with modest incomes. Idahoans working full-time for less than \$20 an hour, seniors and other Idahoans on fixed incomes disproportionately experience more barriers to finding affordable homes when rent vacancies are low.

Survivors of Domestic Violence & Housing

Survivors of domestic violence rely on access to housing and shelter to break free from their abusers without the fear of experiencing homelessness. Safe and affordable housing is crucial to a survivor's long-term safety and security.

Talking Points:

- On a single day in Idaho in 2020, 217 adult and child survivors of domestic violence found refuge in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or housing from other local domestic violence programs. Ninety requests for housing and emergency shelter were denied due to the shortage of programs and shelter vacancies.
- One in ten Idahoans experiencing homelessness in 2019 was a survivor of domestic violence.
- Domestic violence can show up as financial control, social isolation, and monitoring from a partner. In some cases, an abuser may take out loans or credit cards under the survivor's name, fail or refuse to repay the debt, and hurt the survivor's credit score and likelihood of securing a rental home. These forms of abuse and control make it nearly impossible for the survivors who experience this type of violence to have the funds, resources, or credit history needed to find safe and stable housing.
- It is often incredibly difficult for survivors to maintain stable employment and income due to continued harassment or stalking from their abuser. For example, survivors may accumulate several absences from work due to medical treatment, court hearings, and safety concerns.

People Living with Disabilities & Housing

Idahoans living with disabilities experience many barriers to finding affordable homes that meet their financial and mobility needs. Individuals living with disabilities that are unable to work often rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to cover their monthly expenses, and the gap between rental housing costs and SSI is forcing individuals that rely on SSI and other forms of fixed incomes into homelessness, psychiatric hospitals, care centers, nursing homes, or jails. The shortage of accessible housing options is also a significant challenge faced by individuals with disabilities seeking housing.

Talking Points:

- One in three Idahoans experiencing homelessness in 2019 lived with a disability.
- One in three Idaho households receiving rental assistance in 2018 had a person living with a disability.
- Less than two percent of housing units in the United States are accessible and livable for individuals with mobility disabilities.
- Modifiable housing options are available but are usually located in newer buildings where rents are much higher and often unaffordable for individuals with disabilities living on fixed or modest incomes.





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