

Ranking Member Tim Scott (R-S.C.)
Opening Statement
Full Committee Hearing
April 26, 2023 at 10:00 AM

On April 11, we celebrated the 55th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, a triumph for civil rights by outlawing discrimination in housing. While it's important to celebrate these victories, we can't turn a blind eye to progress. It's our responsibility to consider whether progress has indeed been made—or if we need to switch gears and critically rethink how we deliver on these goals.

Unfortunately, our housing policies are not resulting in the true benefits and advancements that our hardest hit families deserve. Despite spending trillions of dollars on subsidies for affordable housing, the homeownership rates for minorities haven't changed since a couple years after the [Fair] Housing Act was passed. An unacceptable reality.

And on top of that, we have all seen the rise in homelessness over the last several years, despite spending more on homelessness programs than ever before. Something is clearly not working.

Additionally, HUD research tells us that the average length of stay for families across all HUD-assisted housing programs has nearly doubled [from] 1995 through 2015. Federal programs are meant to transition people out of poverty, not keep them in poverty. How long before we realize that throwing more money [at] solutions that aren't working is a problem, particularly for those residents living in government-assisted housing? We need a more thoughtful, opportunity-building solution than [we've been] working on so far.

Should we continue to double down on last century's policies, that seemingly failed to solve last century's problems? The answer is obviously no.

In fact, it's time for a new approach. An approach that gives Americans who have lost hope a roadmap to opportunity and prosperity - one that combines proven, bipartisan policies with new solutions. I am introducing a discussion draft of my legislation, the Renewing Opportunity in the American Dream, or ROAD to Housing Act.

Before we dive into some of the policies we are considering in this legislation, I have a few requests to make.

For the witnesses with us today sharing your expertise, and all other stakeholders working to make the American dream a reality for those who today seem to think that it's elusive or unachievable: I would love your expertise as we craft legislation and keep it as a part of the road to the American dream. I ask for your input.

To the other Senators here today: I ask that all of us would put aside whether we're on the Left or the Right, and think about helping more Americans achieve the American dream.

[To] the American public who might be watching us today, all 35 of those watching C-SPAN, hoping to find a path towards prosperity: I've said before that success is created not here in Washington in hearing rooms, but actually they are typically created in apartments and garages, at kitchen tables, and in classrooms across this great nation.

Let's craft laws and policies that help pave the pathway to home ownership.

The ROAD to Housing Act introduces new and needed reforms across all sectors of our housing market. These proposals are meant to be a departure from the stale, partisan ideas that have defined our debates over federal housing policy in recent years:

For families looking to buy a home or struggling to stay in one, my legislation will increase access to high quality housing counseling and financial literacy programs.

For families in rural America, it will provide access to housing that suits your needs.

For families in search of entry-level and affordable housing, it will encourage the construction and financing of lower cost homes.

For families in public housing, it will empower program administrators to provide better-tailored support and encourage access to private capital, keeping your homes safe and healthy.

For those who don't have a place to call home, it will ensure that federal homelessness programs and funding pays for results, rewarding communities or programs who have made progress with helping their homelessness.

And for taxpayers, it will ensure that the federal agencies spending your hard-earned dollars are doing so effectively and with accountability.

Though I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses as they consider the legislation, we must also acknowledge that the housing problems we face are broader than this Committee's jurisdiction. A lack of supply, the costs of complying with government regulations, and a shortage of workers all contribute to the shortage of affordable housing. So, as this legislation develops, we will look forward to having a conversation about innovative solutions [to] the broader challenges that we face.

I hope that we can call all of us to the table to address the housing challenges our country faces, and I look forward to working with each and every one of you.

One final note. Homes and communities aren't built without hard work. So, after making requests from everyone else in this room, I want to make a promise myself, to consistently stay at the table, making sure that housing affordability is not a hearing, but a theme that permeates throughout the entire year.

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