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Eviction Crisis Act Introduced Today in Congress

Washington, DC – Today, Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Rob Portman (R-OH) introduced the *Eviction Crisis Act*, which creates new tools to help end the nation’s continuing eviction epidemic. Among various other promising provisions, the legislation includes the creation of an Emergency Assistance Fund to test, evaluate, and expand proven interventions to help low-income households facing housing instability due to an unexpected economic shock. This policy solution was developed and championed by the [Opportunity Starts at Home campaign](#), which worked closely with the bill’s sponsors. **Utah Housing Coalition is one of the eight nation-wide partners of this campaign.** The introduction of this legislation marks a **significant milestone for the campaign** in advancing its policy agenda.

“Today in America, an unexpected illness, a car accident, or a family emergency can lead to a family being evicted from their home and falling into a cycle of poverty that lasts for years,” **said Bennet.** “The hardship caused by eviction is agonizing for the hundreds of thousands of American families evicted every year – and it’s damaging to our communities. As a former school superintendent, I saw kids unable to stay awake in class because they didn’t have a stable place to sleep the night before. And I’ve heard from many hard-working Coloradans about how one misstep led to their lives falling apart. Our Eviction Crisis Act will put in place bipartisan measures that both prevent eviction and limit the harm when it is unavoidable.”

“Stable housing is a vital part of getting people back on their feet. I’ve long worked on efforts to address homelessness and increase the supply of housing and I’m proud to partner with Senator Bennet on this new bipartisan initiative. This legislation will help prevent avoidable evictions, reduce homelessness, and make it easier for people to escape poverty by keeping a roof over their heads,” **said Portman.**

Tara Rollins, Executive Director Utah Housing Coalition, said “In Utah 96% of renters are not represented by an attorney in eviction cases whereas 87% of landlords have representation. We are very excited to see new tools that will help reduce preventable evictions and mitigate eviction related consequences.

Adjusting for inflation, the median rent payment has risen 61% since 1960 while median renter income grew only 5%. In 2016, 2.3 million eviction filings were made in courthouses across the United States—a rate of four every minute. That same year, one in 50 renters was evicted from his or her home. This affordable housing crisis has crippled economic security for families and placed enormous costs on the nation’s health care system, courts, schools, and local governments.

The Eviction Crisis Act will:

Improve Data and Analysis on Evictions

- Creates a national database to standardize data and track evictions, in order to better inform policy decisions.
- Establishes a Federal Advisory Committee on Eviction Research to make recommendations related to data collection, as well as policies and practices that can prevent evictions or mitigate their consequences.
- Authorizes funding for a comprehensive study to track evictions, analyze landlord-tenant law, and assess varying factors in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Reduce Preventable Evictions and Mitigate Eviction-Related Consequences

Co-invest in state and local government programs:

- Creates a program to fund state and local governments expanding the use of landlord-tenant community courts and increasing the presence of social services representatives for tenants, which help both tenants and landlords avoid the high cost of eviction.
- Establishes an Emergency Assistance Fund to provide financial assistance and housing stability-related services to eviction-vulnerable tenants.

Support increased legal representation for tenants:

- Expresses support for substantially increasing funding for the Legal Services Corporation, a public-private partnership that provides legal services to low-income Americans.

Improve Information on Tenant Screening Reports

- Requires consumer reporting agencies to provide consumers with tenant screening reports when they are requested as part of a rental application process, so tenants can contest and correct inaccurate or incomplete information.
- When a court rules in favor of a tenant in an eviction proceeding, requires those judgments and eviction filings related to that proceeding to be removed from tenant screening reports.

Most families in poverty who rent spend at least half of their incomes on housing, leaving virtually no margin for an unexpected expense. Broken-down cars, unreimbursed medical bills, or temporary declines of income can quickly send vulnerable households down the spiral of housing instability, eviction, and even homelessness. If enacted, the Emergency Assistance Fund could provide a blueprint for helping millions of low-income households that live on the edge of what they can afford.

Leading national [organizations](#) from the housing, education, health, civil rights, anti-hunger, anti-poverty, criminal justice, child welfare, and faith-based sectors have come together through the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign to advocate for more robust and equitable federal housing policies. Earlier this year, the campaign released its national policy agenda, “*Within Reach*,” which calls for a significant increase in rental assistance, a major expansion of the supply of deeply affordable housing, and emergency financial assistance to keep people in crisis stably housed.

“I applaud Senators Michael Bennet and Rob Portman for their leadership in introducing legislation to create new tools to help end America’s ongoing eviction epidemic, which most severely impacts the lowest-income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and other individuals,” said **Diane Yentel, President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition**. “If enacted, the Eviction Crisis Act would create a new Emergency Assistance Fund to extend an emergency cushion to families in crisis. Together with the legislation’s new data collection and outreach initiatives, the bill would help low income renters avert the downward spiral of housing instability and homelessness. I urge Congress to quickly pass this bill.”

“As an educator who has taught at a homeless shelter, I know—as do NEA members across the nation—how important it is for children to have a home of their own,” said **Lily Eskelsen Garcia, President of the National Education Association (NEA)**. “Home is a child’s universe. Students in stable homes are able to concentrate better, and without the burden of adult worries, they are free to learn, be curious about the world, and dream. Educators want all students to have that experience, and that’s why NEA members applaud Senators Bennet and Portman for introducing the Eviction Crisis Act, which will help families facing desperate circumstances.”

To download the campaign’s fact sheet about the Emergency Assistance Fund, please [click here](#).

To read the full text of the legislation, [click here](#).

To read the press release from Senators Bennet and Portman, [click here](#).

To visit Senator Bennet’s website for more information, [click here](#).

View the Eviction Crisis Act video [here](#)

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