



# Duckworth, Durbin, Booker Introduce Bill to Enhance Public Housing Oversight and Transparency, Improve Conditions for Residents

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, as part of her ongoing efforts to prevent future housing crises [like what happened in Cairo, Illinois](#), U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), along with Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Cory Booker (D-NJ), introduced legislation to improve public housing oversight and transparency by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The bill, the *Averting Crises in Housing Assistance (ACHA) Act*, seeks to address the national backlog of needed repairs in public housing facilities by investing \$70 billion in the Public Housing Capital Fund and improve public housing outcomes for residents.

“The mismanagement, fraud, and abuse that happened in Cairo and forced hundreds of people out of their homes should never happen again,” said Duckworth. “While it’s critical that we hold those responsible accountable for their actions, we also need to look forward and do everything we can to improve policies and prevent future crises. I’m proud to introduce legislation today that will strengthen oversight of public housing facilities, make progress in addressing the backlog of critical repairs and go a long way toward preventing the same failures that resulted in so many families being displaced.”

“What took place in Cairo was a failure at all levels of government. The bill Senator Duckworth and I are introducing would give public housing residents a stronger voice in ensuring that what happened in Cairo never happens again. The *Averting Crises in Housing Act* would require early intervention by HUD to assist public housing authorities in bringing their properties into good standing,” said Durbin. “No American should have to live in unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Period.”

Specifically, the ACHA Act would:

- Strengthen HUD oversight of public housing properties by updating the conditions under which a property would be deemed “failing”;
- Allow residents to petition HUD to intervene if a property meets any such conditions, but passes its inspection;
- Require HUD to partner with a housing authority with a failing property to develop an action plan and address unacceptable conditions or risk a private right of action by residents against the Federal government;
- Require HUD or the housing authority to provide notice to residents of a failing property as to its designation, the action plan and timeline for rehabilitation, and the options available to residents if the property is not brought into compliance;
- Invest \$70 billion in the Public Housing Capital Fund to address the existing backlog of repairs and help build, modernize, and rehabilitate public housing;
- Make explicit in the statute that a receivership’s goal should be to maintain and rehabilitate, to the greatest extent possible, the existing housing inventory; and
- Push HUD to update regulations and allow small public housing agencies to voluntarily merge or consolidate to pool resources.

The bill was endorsed by the National Housing Law Project, National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Shriver Center on Poverty Law.

“NHLP is excited to support Senator Duckworth’s Averting Crises in Housing Assistance (ACHA) Act,” said Shamus Roller, Executive Director of NHLP. “The nation’s federally-owned public housing stock is a crucial and threatened resource, and HUD has largely abdicated its responsibility to preserve and maintain public housing properties. The ACHA Act will strengthen HUD’s oversight of failing properties and prioritize the preservation of public housing over demolition or conversion. Importantly, the bill will put tenants at the center of conversations about their own homes and protect their health and safety.”

Since being sworn into the Senate in 2017, Duckworth has worked to address the challenges faced by Cairo residents, hold those responsible for the crisis accountable and improve the Cairo economy. Duckworth has [visited](#) Cairo [several times](#), secured a commitment for HUD Secretary Carson to visit and hear firsthand from residents and elevated the community’s needs to his attention during multiple meetings and calls, and [placed](#) a blanket hold on all HUD nominees after the agency failed to respond to her request for detailed information regarding its decision to shutter two additional AHCA facilities in Thebes, Illinois. In 2019, [the City of Cairo presented Duckworth with their Service Award](#), recognizing her continuing efforts to help the Cairo community, protect Alexander County Housing Authority residents, bring accountability to wrongdoers and grow the region’s economy.