



An Opportunity Agenda for Renters

The Case for Simultaneous Investments in Residential
Mobility and Low-income Communities

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Introduction and summary

*Too often, where people live determines what opportunities they have in life. ...
In this country, of all countries, a person's zip code shouldn't decide their destiny.
We don't guarantee equal outcomes, but we do strive to guarantee an equal shot
at opportunity—in every neighborhood, for every American.*

— President Barack Obama¹

As the nation grapples with severe and worsening inequality, ensuring that opportunity is not limited by where a person lives is of utmost importance. A lack of available affordable housing and deeply rooted patterns of residential segregation have created a situation in which where people live depends in large part on their income, race, and ethnicity. For this reason, it is imperative to pursue policies that help all households find decent and affordable housing in neighborhoods that offer safety, stability, and opportunity.

To achieve this goal, we urge a two-pronged approach. Policies need to both promote residential mobility and a deconcentration of poverty while also supporting reinvestment in racially segregated and economically impoverished neighborhoods. Doing so will help transform these neighborhoods into healthy communities where residents have access to the basic building blocks of opportunity: high-quality housing, jobs, good schools, transportation, and health care.

This report provides an overview of the latest research that demonstrates how people's address affects their life outcomes. The report also outlines several policies to promote economic opportunity for America's low-income renters. Specifically, the following recommendations support affordable housing and economic opportunity:

- Use tax policy to increase the supply of affordable rental housing
- Eliminate restrictive and exclusionary zoning that keeps households out of high-opportunity neighborhoods
- Fund the federal housing voucher program in order to better equip it with tools to help households access high-opportunity neighborhoods

- Take a comprehensive approach to revitalizing high-poverty communities
- Preserve affordable rental housing more effectively
- Ensure that the secondary market continues to support affordable rental housing
- Maintain single-family rentals as a source of affordable housing

While the policy changes that are detailed in this report relate to housing, their effects reach far beyond physical buildings. Rather, by connecting more households with the supports and institutions that enable them to succeed, these policies will promote economic opportunity for millions of low-income households that rent.

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As progressives, we believe America should be a land of boundless opportunity, where people can climb the ladder of economic mobility. We believe we owe it to future generations to protect the planet and promote peace and shared global prosperity.

And we believe an effective government can earn the trust of the American people, champion the common good over narrow self-interest, and harness the strength of our diversity.

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