



THE LOW INCOME HOUSING
COALITION OF ALABAMA

2020 ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

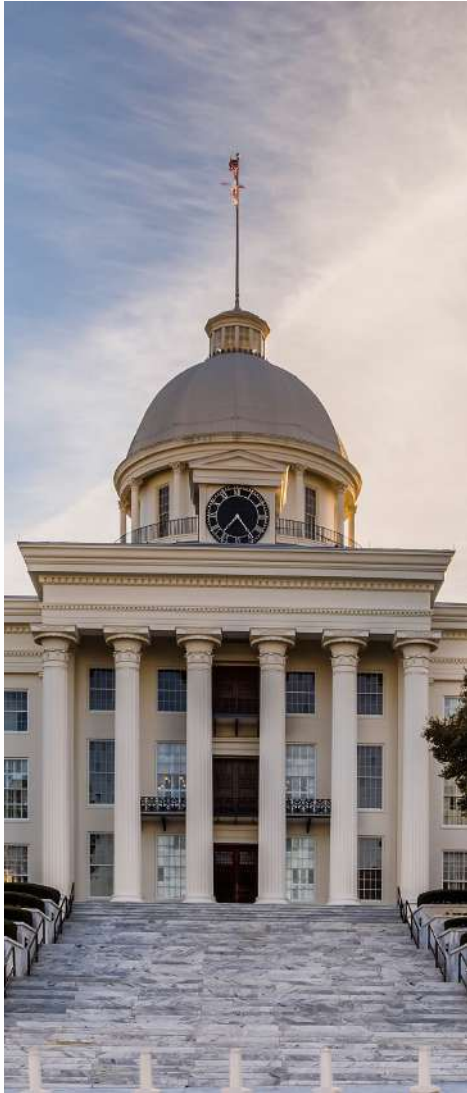


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A MESSAGE FROM LIHCA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LIHCA has a history of successful initiatives and advocacy efforts focused on Alabamians with the most financial need. After four years of advocacy and education efforts, LIHCA and its partners saw the creation of the Housing Trust Fund during the 2012 legislative session. However, funds were never allocated to the Housing Trust Fund. Having money in the Alabama Housing Trust Fund would mean that more people have the opportunity to live healthy, independent lives.

The 2020 legislative session presents a promising opportunity to finally fund the Alabama Housing Trust Fund (AHTF), and we will need your help! We must provide access to more safe, decent, and healthy homes for Alabamians. Please join LIHCA in advocating for a dedicated revenue source for the AHTF.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Russell L. Bennett".

Russell L. Bennett, LGSW, PhD
Executive Director

ABOUT THE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

The mission of the Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama (LIHCA) is to increase housing opportunities for Alabamians with the greatest financial need. This is done in a variety of ways, and one of those ways is through advocacy. We created this guide to assist anyone interested in advocating with us for increased housing opportunities for Alabamians. This guide provides guidance and tools for advocates and information you can share with legislators. The first section of this toolkit focuses on the Alabama Housing Trust Fund and how you can effectively advocate. The second section contains research a data that shows who is most affected by the affordable housing crisis in Alabama. The last section gives you a deeper understanding of who LIHCA is and how you can join our work.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to help you create an advocacy plan and empower your voice so that your representatives understand the issues important to you. Use this guide to educate yourself and become a stronger advocate for the AHTF. Please share this toolkit widely to those who might be interested in joining your efforts, such as other community advocates, friends, and family! To share only the educational portions of this toolkit, please find a convenient educational packet at www.LIHCA.org.



#FundtheAHTF

HELPFUL ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

ADECA

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

AHFA

Alabama Housing Finance Authority

AHTF

The Alabama Housing Trust Fund

AMI

Area Median Income

FMR

Fair Market Rent

FY

Fiscal Year

HOME

Home Investment Partnership Program

LIHCA

The Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama

LIHTC

Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program

NLIHC

The National Low Income Housing Coalition

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STEPS TO ADVOCACY

Calling or contacting your state representatives about the AHTF can, at times, seem intimidating and daunting. This toolkit is designed to help you craft an advocacy message and empower you to have your voice and experience heard by your representatives! Below are some first steps to the advocacy process.

Educate Yourself

Education is a critical first step to becoming a strong advocate.

Learn about the issue of affordable housing in Alabama! This guide contains information about our affordable housing crisis statewide.

You can also subscribe to LIHCA's newsletter to receive the most up to date information.

Define your Ask

Three Parts to making your case:

1. Statement of concern: What is wrong?
2. Statement of the value/frame: Why does it matter?
3. Statement of Solution: What is the policy solution?

Take Action

Share your story or the story of someone you know who is affected by the State's lack of safe, affordable housing.

- Send a Letter
- Make a phone call
- Tweet your legislator
- Set up a meeting in person
- Invite a legislator to your agency

Follow Up

Always thank a legislator for their time. A handwritten note can go a long way.

Share your efforts with others and get them involved!

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CORE MESSAGING FOR ADVOCACY

"Hardworking Alabamians should be able to pay rent and still be able to put food on the table."

"Every child deserves a safe place to call home."

"The men and women who defend our country deserve to return to a safe and affordable home."

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE THESE MESSAGES

USE MESSAGES CONSISTENTLY

Message discipline—using the messages as they are written, without changes - is the key to consistent, effective advocacy.

USE MESSAGES CONSTANTLY

Use these messages wherever and whenever you can. These messages are versatile and work into your speeches, publications, and talking points.

PAIR MESSAGES WITH STORIES

Humanize the issues of affordable housing by allowing those who have benefited to share their own, unique stories.

PAIR MESSAGES WITH RESULTS

Show that affordable housing programs are worth the investment by showing results for individuals, families, and communities.

TAKING ACTION: AHTF TALKING POINTS

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Hardworking Alabamians, seniors, and those on fixed incomes can't afford a safe place to call home.

WHY THE AHTF?

The AHTF will create housing opportunities for hardworking Alabamians, veterans, children, seniors, and those on fixed incomes.

HOW WILL IT BE FUNDED?

- The mortgage record tax is a one-time filing fee upon purchase/refinance of a mortgage.
- Enacted in 1935 and has never been changed.
- Current mortgage record tax is set at 15 cents per \$100 indebtedness
- Proposed legislation will increase tax by one nickel to 20 cents per \$100 indebtedness.

WHO CAN ACCESS AHTF FUNDS?

- Nonprofits and groups like Habitat for Humanity can use these funds to build more and rehabilitate homes.
- Individuals cannot access the funds. It is for organizations, municipalities, etc.

TAKING ACTION.

Calling Your State Legislators.

Calling your State Representative or Senator is one of the easiest, most effective ways an individual can advocate. If you are intimidated by the idea of calling your elected official, this guide will help answer some questions you may have. Your legislators want to hear about the issues that matter the most to YOU!

1. WHO ARE MY LEGISLATORS?

Lawmakers want to hear from those they represent. It is easy to find out who represents you in the Alabama State Legislature. Visit: www.legislature.state.al.us and select "Find my Legislator."

2. WHAT NUMBER DO I CALL?

The easiest way to call your legislator's office is by calling Alabama's switchboard at 334-242-8000 and asking for your Senator and/or Representative's office.

3. WHO WILL I TALK TO?

Most likely, a staff member or intern will answer your call and take a message.

4. WHAT DO I SAY?

We have prepared a script to use as a guide when speaking with a legislator or staff member. Don't assume that your legislator has knowledge of the issue.

5. WHAT MORE CAN I DO?

Calls are most effective when an office receives multiple calls about the same issue within a few days. Tell others in your district about your call and encourage them to call as well!

Introduction: "Hello, my name is ___ and I am one of your constituents."

Statement of concern: "When families in Alabama do not have a safe, decent, and affordable place to call home, their children are effected physically, emotionally, and academically."

Statement of the value/frame: "I believe that every child deserves a safe place to call home."

Statement of Solution: "To ensure that every child has the best opportunity to succeed in school and life, we need a dedicated revenue source for the Alabama Housing Trust Fund. Only when we can ensure that every child has a place to call home, can we give every child the opportunity to succeed."

Thank You: "Thank you for your time today and consideration."

THE ALABAMA HOUSING TRUST FUND: AN OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE AHTF?

A housing trust fund is a flexible source of funding that can be used to meet a variety of housing needs. It is designed to maintain, retain, and create affordable housing in Alabama.

Funds can be used for development, rehabilitation, down payment assistance, supportive services and other housing related activities.

Housing Trust Funds allow states to address critical and/or urgent situations in a fiscally responsible way.

The Housing Trust fund was established with the passage of the Alabama Affordable Housing Act in 2012 (Act 2012-384). It is currently unfunded.

HOW WILL IT BE FUNDED?

- The mortgage record tax is a one-time filing fee upon purchase or a refinance of a mortgage.
- Enacted in 1935 and has never been changed.
- Increase by 5 cents per \$100 of indebtedness.
- The increase makes Alabama equal to Georgia and less than Florida. Mississippi does not have a comparable document filing fee.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

- Administered by The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA).
- All funds will go to 60% and below Area Median Income (AMI), with majority going to 30% and below AMI.
- 40% will be set aside for rural communities.
- Homeownership projects must follow the ownership requirements of the Habitat for Humanity program.
- Appointment of committee that will advise ADECA on how funds will be used, criteria for evaluation, etc.
- Competitive, annual application.
- Eligible entities: nonprofit organizations, counties, municipalities, public housing authorities. For-profit developers must partner with a nonprofit in order to access funds.
- No related entities may receive more than 15% of the Alabama Housing Trust Fund's annual allocation.



For more information about the need to secure dedicated revenue for the AHTF, please visit www.lihca.org.

THE ALABAMA HOUSING TRUST FUND

There's nothing else like it.

What is the Alabama Housing Trust Fund?

The Alabama Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) creates a new opportunity for the State of Alabama to support affordable housing. Once a dedicated revenue source is established, the AHTF will serve as a flexible source of funding enabling a wide range of activities, including construction, rehabilitation and/or preservation of affordable housing, independent adaptive homes for people with disabilities, and permanent supportive homes for people with severe challenges. The activities can be as flexible as needed. Housing trust funds are recognized across the country as an innovative development approach that takes advantage of unique opportunities and addresses critical and/or urgent situations. Right now, there's nothing else like it: there is no other flexible funding source dedicated to housing like this in Alabama.

Alabama relies solely on federal funding for the development of its affordable housing.

Public funding is critical in developing affordable housing because it provides access to the financial capital developers need to enable them to keep development costs low enough so that future owners and renters can afford homeownership and rental opportunities. Right now in Alabama, the only public funding that is available originates with the federal government. If not for the federal HOME Investment Partnership Program and the IRS' Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program, Alabama would have no public money to invest in its own housing. Why is this a problem? Here are the two major reasons: 1) the limited Federal funding already isn't enough money to address the housing needs of Alabama residents, and 2) many of Alabama's housing needs aren't easily addressed with these funds. Most of the HOME funds are required by the state to be used only for new construction of multi-family rental housing and must be coupled with the LIHTC program. What does this mean? Here are some examples:

- A young family who wants to buy a home in rural Alabama can't be helped by existing resources in our state.
- An elderly couple on a fixed income may have to move from their home of more than 20 years if financial assistance is not available for needed repairs.
- A veteran and his family trying to rebuild their storm-damaged home and keep their children in school won't be able to find the help they need under the existing programs in Alabama.

Why should Alabama dedicate revenue to the Alabama Housing Trust Fund?

Because we need it! The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that Alabama lacks over 80,000 available and affordable homes for extremely low income Alabamians, including people living with disabilities and those surviving on minimum wage. This is an astounding number.

In addition to meeting urgent housing needs as they arise, housing trust fund dollars also help to address longstanding community needs. These dollars create and maintain quality, affordable homes that allow people to improve their lives, while reducing or eliminating their need for social services. When someone has a safe, affordable home, they are less likely to need services and are more likely to retain employment or attend school, therefore providing a better opportunity to succeed in life. Simply put, quality affordable housing creates strong and healthy communities. In addition to these social benefits, communities will also see economic benefits such as job creation and increased economic activity in the local economies where trust fund dollars are being used. However, we will not see the benefits of the Alabama Housing Trust Fund until we secure dedicated revenue.



For more information about the need to secure dedicated revenue for the AHTF, please visit www.lihca.org.

THE HOUSING NEED ACROSS ALABAMA



Alabama currently lacks 69,411* affordable and available homes for hardworking Alabamians, seniors and those with disabilities on a fixed income, veterans, and the working poor.

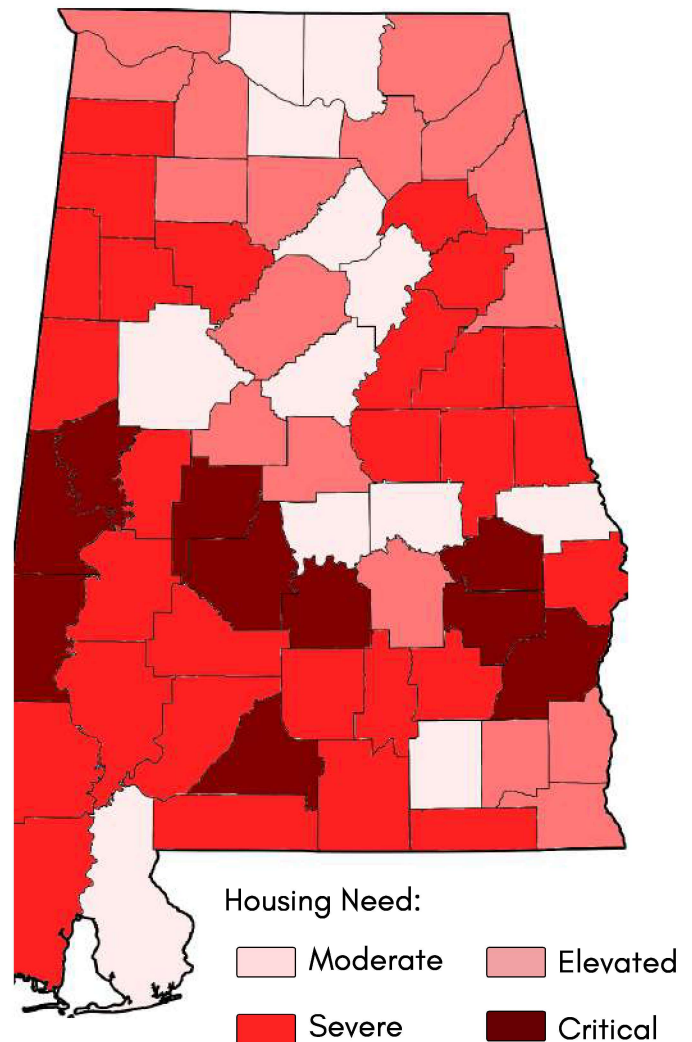
38 Alabama counties have a monthly affordability gap of at least **\$100**

13 Alabama counties have a monthly affordability gap of at least **\$200**

6 Alabama counties have a monthly affordability gap of at least **\$300**

What is a monthly affordability gap?

A monthly affordability gap is defined as the difference between the price of rent affordable at the renter's wage and Fair Market Rent (FMR).



Housing Need:
Moderate Elevated
Severe Critical

Every child deserves a safe place to call home.

*National Low Income Housing Coalition 2019 Alabama Housing Profile Report
Monthly affordability gap data is from LIHCA's 2016 Red Book, full report can be found at www.lihca.org.

2019 ALABAMA HOUSING PROFILE



Across Alabama, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Many of these households are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. Severely cost burdened poor households are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay the rent, and to experience unstable housing situations like evictions.

SENATORS: Richard C. Shelby and Doug Jones

KEY FACTS

183,528
OR
31%
Renter Households that are extremely low income

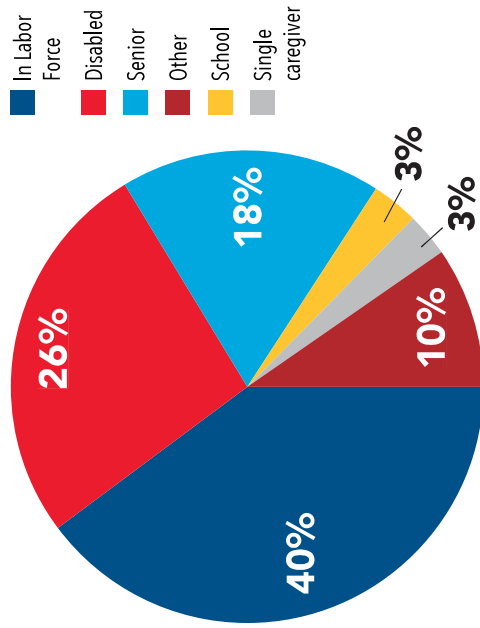
\$24,600
Maximum income of 4-person extremely low income households (state level)

-\$69,411
Shortage of rental homes affordable and available for extremely low income renters

\$30,466
Annual household income needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home at HUD's Fair Market Rent.

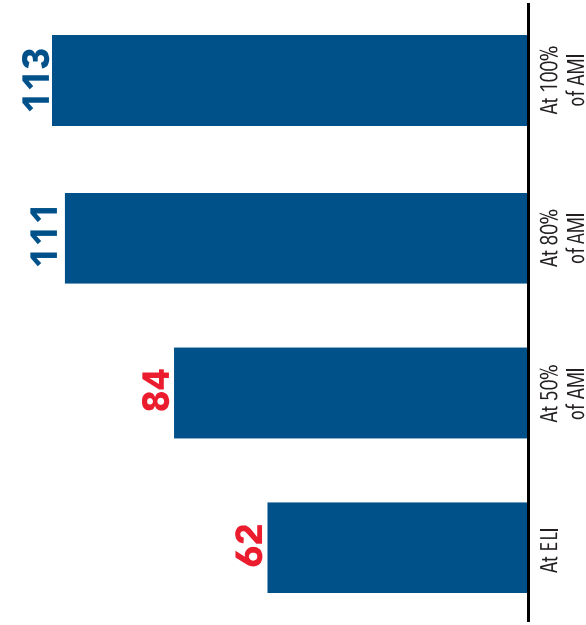
65%
Percent of extremely low income renter households with severe cost burden

EXTREMELY LOW INCOME RENTER HOUSEHOLDS



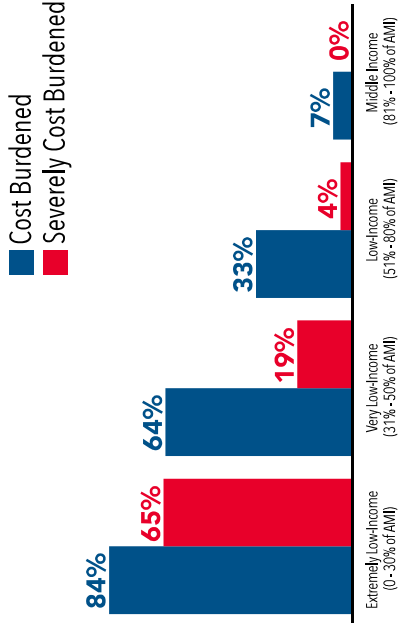
Note: Mutually exclusive categories applied in the following order: senior, disabled, in labor force, enrolled in school, single adult caregiver of a child under 7 or of a household member with a disability, and other. Nationally, 15% of extremely low-income renter households are single adult caregivers, more than half of whom usually work more than 20 hours per week and 2% of whom are in school. Source: 2017 ACS PUMS.

AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE HOMES PER 100 RENTER HOUSEHOLDS



Source: NLIHC tabulations of 2017 ACS PUMS

HOUSING COST BURDEN BY INCOME GROUP



Renter households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs and utilities are cost burdened; those spending more than half of their income are severely cost burdened. Source: NLIHC tabulations of 2017 ACS PUMS.

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A PLACE TO CALL HOME

THE ALABAMA HOUSING TRUST FUND WILL HELP ALABAMA'S CHILDREN

1 IN 4

children in Alabama live in poverty.

14,550

children under the age of 6 experienced homelessness in the school year 2017-2018.**

24%

of families with children under the age of 18 have a high housing cost burden.***

WHY IS HOMELESSNESS AN ISSUE FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN?

Children experiencing homelessness are TWICE* as likely to:

- have a learning disability.
- repeat a grade.
- be suspended from school.

WHY IS THE ALABAMA HOUSING TRUST FUND BENEFICIAL FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN?

The Alabama Housing Trust Fund can be used to construct and rehabilitate affordable homes for Alabama families.

This directly benefits children by ensuring children have:

- Safe places to sleep each night.
- A greater chance to succeed because barriers to healthy development associated with homelessness are reduced.



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*American Psychological Association: www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty

** U.S. Department of Education Early Childhood Homelessness State Profiles 2020

*** The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2019 Kids Count data book: State trends in child well-being. (2019). Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The men and women who defend our country deserve to return to a safe and affordable home.

THE ALABAMA HOUSING TRUST FUND WILL HELP ALABAMA'S VETERANS

WHY IS HOUSING AN ISSUE FOR ALABAMA'S VETERANS?

- Approximately 46,312 Alabama veterans live in homes with one or more major problems of quality, crowding, or cost.*
- According to HUD's 2019 Point-in-Time Count, 292 veterans in Alabama are experiencing homelessness on any given night.**

WHY IS THE ALABAMA HOUSING TRUST FUND BENEFICIAL FOR ALABAMA'S VETERANS?

The Alabama Housing Trust Fund can be used to construct and rehabilitate affordable homes for Alabama veterans.

This directly benefits veterans by ensuring they have:

- A safe, decent, and affordable home when they return from service.
- Access to housing support when other publicly funded programs fall short.

In 2018, there was a

26%

increase among homeless veterans in AL from 2017.**

Housing affordability is the greatest housing problem among veterans.*

Roughly 18.9% of Alabama veterans pay too much for their housing.

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*Housing Assistance Council Veterans Data Central - Alabama State Profile 2019

** HUD 2019 PIT Estimate of Veteran Homelessness in the U.S.

THE LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION OF ALABAMA



OUR MISSION

LIHCA's mission is to increase housing opportunities for Alabamians with the greatest financial need. To this end, LIHCA accomplishes its mission through state and national advocacy, education, and research.

Every child deserves a safe place to call home.

PRODUCTS

- The Alabama Tenants Handbook – A free handbook educating renters and landlords on the tenant laws in Alabama.
- The Red Book – A comprehensive housing needs assessment for the state of Alabama.
- Housing Trust Fund Advocacy Toolkit

The men and women who defend our country deserve to return to a safe and affordable home.

2020 POLICY PRIORITIES

- To Secure dedicated revenue for the Alabama Housing Trust Fund (AHTF).
- To work with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) to use federal funds to expand and preserve affordable housing.
- To work collaboratively with the Alabama Housing Finance Authority (AHFA) to develop the rules and regulations related to the National Housing Trust Fund to use the funds to expand and preserve affordable housing.
- To work collaboratively with the Alabama Housing Finance Authority (AHFA) to incorporate green building techniques in future HOME and LIHTC projects.



Hardworking Alabamians should be able to pay rent and still be able to put food on the table.

For more information about LIHCA, please visit www.lihca.org

The Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama Policy Partners Form



By joining LIHCA as a policy partner, you become a member of a wide network of leaders in the affordable housing and homelessness movement including low-income persons, lenders, developers, property managers, housing counselors, Continuum of Care agencies and government officials. Together, we advocate for sensible and sustainable housing policies that ensure affordable, safe, and decent housing opportunities for Alabamians. Becoming a Policy Partner is available to individuals, businesses and organizations who want to increase housing opportunities and alleviate homelessness for Alabamians with the greatest financial need.

Name _____ Title _____

Name of Organization or Business (If Individual please leave space blank)

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Office Phone _____ Mobile Phone _____

Email address _____

Policy Partner Level	Donation Amount	
Housing Heroes	\$1,000 or more	_____
Power Builders	\$750 - \$999	_____
Advocacy Leaders	\$500 - \$749	_____
Problem Solvers	\$250 - \$499	_____
Goal Setters	\$50 - \$249	_____
United Voices	\$5 - \$49	_____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Complete this form and return it with your payment to LIHCA, P.O. Box 130159, Birmingham, AL 35213-0159. Phone number: (205) 939-0411 ext. 207. Fax number: (205) 939-4048. Please fill out one form per member (if joining as both an individual **and** as a Community Organization, please fill out two forms). Payments can be made online at www.lihca.org or by check. Please make checks payable to the Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama. Membership dues are tax-deductible. All memberships are on a unified membership cycle; memberships are due on January 1st and expire on December 31st of each year.

*Please note that your contact information may be shared with other members of the Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama. If you do not want your contact information shared, please check this box:

How did you hear about us? personal referral from (NAME): _____
 Email Website Facebook Twitter Other _____

LIHCA POLICY PARTNER BENEFITS

1. Housing Heroes **\$1,000 or more**

- One (1) Southern Conference on Homelessness and Housing Registration
- Complimentary Exhibition Table for the entire Housing Works! Conference
- Logo and/or name on LIHCA website as a Housing Hero
- Complimentary job vacancy posting service on the Coalition's website
- Opportunity to submit an annual Member Spotlight article for member communications

2. Power Builders **\$750 - \$999**

- One (1) Southern Conference on Homelessness and Housing Registration at 50% Discount
- Logo and/or name on LIHCA website as a Power Builder
- Complimentary job vacancy posting service on the Coalition's website
- Opportunity to submit a Member Spotlight article for member communications

3. Advocacy Leaders **\$500 - \$749**

- Logo and/or name on LIHCA website as an Advocacy Leader
- Complimentary job vacancy posting service on the Coalition's website
- Opportunity to submit a Member Spotlight article for member communications

4. Problem Solvers **\$250 - \$499**

- Logo and/or name on LIHCA website as a Problem Solver
- Opportunity to submit a Member Spotlight article for member communications

5. Goal Setters **\$50 - \$249**

- Logo and/or name on LIHCA website as a Goal Setter

6. United Voices **\$5 - \$49**

Benefits for all members including United Voices:

- Each membership is entitled to be represented by one voting member at the Coalition's annual meeting
- Be part of a collaboration to advocate for low income housing at the local, state and federal levels
- Notification of significant affordable housing policy developments requiring constituent calls or letters to elected representatives.
- Electronic newsletters via email
- Free or Discounted Publications and e-books, such as the *Alabama Tenants' Handbook* and the *Red Book*
- Resource referrals with linkage to state and local networks
- Access to our network of resources to help you better serve individuals and families in your community