

2026 HOUSING MATTERS CONFERENCE



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SEPTEMBER 29-30, 2026

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Illinois



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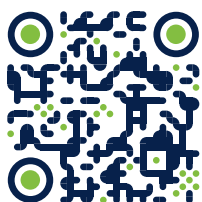
Through the *Blueprint for Housing Opportunity* initiative, Citi is putting its capital, community impact and expertise toward helping more Americans access housing they can truly afford.

WELCOME



2026 HOUSING MATTERS CONFERENCE

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**See who's at the conference
with you!**

Download a PDF of the conference
registration list or visit the registration
table to pick up a print copy.





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Benefits to Property	- Significant long-term savings on utility costs (based on usage, often \$100,000/year) - Simple enrollment process with ongoing support from Dimension	- Valuable resident benefit without additional operating costs - Enhances resident satisfaction with guaranteed bill relief - Enrollment campaigns supported by Dimension (materials, training, events)
Benefits to residents	- Property commits to reinvesting savings for property improvements or resident services - More stable housing costs and improved building services over time	\$50 gift card after enrollment is validated - Guaranteed electricity bill savings for 20 years - Average annual household savings: ~200 - Simple 10-minute enrollment process

To learn more, go to tinyurl.com/DimensionCS or visit tinyurl.com/scheduledimension to take the next step!



FLOOR PLAN



Connections Room

Join us in the **Honors Room** anytime to take a break and mingle! Organizational members of Housing Action Illinois can stop by to pick up a member appreciation bag.



SCHEDULE



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

- | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 8:30 am | Registration & Continental Breakfast
8:30 am – 12:30 pm Stop by The Literary's book table to get a copy of <i>Don't Go</i> and peruse other books | Pre-Function Area |
| 8:30 am | Coffee & Conversation
Start your day with an informal networking breakfast to connect with other attendees | Outside Heritage Halls |
| 10:00 am | Welcome & Opening Keynote
With Tonika Lewis Johnson and Maria Krysan ,
Co-authors of <i>Don't Go: Stories of Segregation and How to Disrupt It</i> | Illinois Ballroom |
| 11:30 am | Break | |
| 11:45 am | Workshop Session I: Spotlights
Portfolio Health Initiative: Examining the Status of Affordable Housing in Illinois
Lessons Learned: Collaborating on Homelessness Solutions in Peoria*
In Conversation: Illinois Housing Counseling Coalition
Ownership or Rip-Off? Promised a Home, Delivered a Trap
Housing Action Corps: Building Capacity and Leadership | Heritage Hall 1

Heritage Hall 2
Heritage Hall 5
Heritage Hall 3 & 6
Heritage Hall 4 |
| 12:30 pm | Membership Meeting & Luncheon | Illinois Ballroom |
| 2:00 pm | Break | |
| 2:30 pm | Workshop Session II
Land Banks: An Underutilized Resource
When the Math Doesn't Work: Navigating Housing on SSI & Low Incomes*
Helping Others Without Losing Yourself: Burnout Prevention for Housing Counselors
The State of Fair Housing in Illinois
Reframing Problems for Social Change (Session runs from 2:30 – 4:00 pm) | Heritage Hall 1
Heritage Hall 2
Heritage Hall 5

Heritage Hall 3 & 6
Heritage Hall 4 |
| 3:45 pm | Break | |
| 4:00 pm | Reception
Please join us for live music from The Broadmoor Quartet, hot appetizers, and an open bar. The winner of our 50/50 raffle will be announced at 5:30 pm. | Outside Heritage Halls |

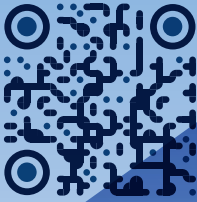
* These sessions have been approved for CE (continuing education) credits for LCSW, LSW, LCPC, and LPC licenses; please sign in with a staff member at the session to make sure you get credit.



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

7:30 am	Registration & Continental Breakfast	Pre-Function Area
8:30 am	Workshop Session III Local Focus: Planning & Development in Champaign-Urbana The Home Illinois Plan: Looking Back at Accomplishments and Planning for the Future* Navigating Federal Changes in Housing Counseling Increasing Housing Supply: How We Keep Making Progress From Pain Point to Partnership: Exploring Strategic Collaboration	Heritage Hall 1 Heritage Hall 2 Heritage Hall 5 Heritage Hall 3 & 6 Heritage Hall 4
9:45 am	Break	
10:15 am	Workshop Session IV Champaign Community Tour (10:00 – 11:30am) Responding to and Impacting the Uncertain Federal Landscape for Homeless Services Beyond HUD: Diversifying Funding Streams in Uncertain Times Mapping Illinois Housing Challenges: Using Data to Inform Policy and Investment The Responsible Innovation Blueprint: Aligning AI Adoption with Your Mission	Off-Site Heritage Hall 2 Heritage Hall 5 Heritage Hall 3 & 6 Heritage Hall 4
11:30 am	Luncheon & Closing Keynote With Renee Willis, President & CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition	Illinois Ballroom

* These sessions have been approved for CE (continuing education) credits for LCSW, LSW, LCPC, and LPC licenses; please sign in with a staff member at the session to make sure you get credit.



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bit.ly/2026HMSchedule for
program, speaker information,
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2027 Housing Matters
Thursday, October 21 – Friday, October 22, 2027
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GENERAL SESSIONS



Opening Keynote: Tonika Lewis Johnson & Maria Krysan

Tuesday, September 29 | 10:00 am – 11:30 am
Illinois Ballroom



During our kickoff, Tonika and Maria—an artist and a sociologist who met through their shared passion for anti-segregation work—will share from their collection of residential stories and photos that uncover the hidden influence of both subtle and overt “don’t go” messages and the segregation they perpetuate in Chicago. Attendees will be invited into the lives of those

who live in and have ignored the warning to stay away from “don’t go” neighborhoods, shedding light on the devastating consequences of racial segregation and disinvestment, as well as the simple actions that serve as antidotes to “place-ism” and the inevitable rewards of coming together.

Membership Meeting & Luncheon

Tuesday, September 29 | 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm
Illinois Ballroom

Join us for this once-a-year opportunity to meet in person with our diverse membership and vote on new and renewing members of our Board of Directors. This year, we’ll discuss ways to take action and connect with Housing Action in 2027 as we recognize the 40th anniversary of our coalition.

All are welcome to join, whether or not your organization is a member.

Reception

Tuesday, September 29 | 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Outside Heritage Halls



Relax and unwind the day while meeting colleagues from across our field. With over 80 years of combined performing experience,

The Broadmoor Quartet will accompany the reception in a special instrumental trio setting with jazz standards, Bossa Nova, and classic songs by ‘West Coast’ and ‘Chamber Jazz’ artists.

Reception supported by Midland States Bank.

Closing Keynote: Renee Willis, NLIHC

Wednesday, September 30 | 11:30 am – 1:00 pm
Illinois Ballroom



More than ever, shifting federal policies and budgets are impacting all sectors of our work, and it is critical for our field to stay informed and respond together. With more than 30 years of experience in

affordable housing, Renee Willis has established successful community and region-wide initiatives while ensuring that NLIHC’s commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion is woven through its culture, policies, programs, and practices. She has led NLIHC with strategic vision, deep collaboration, and an unshakable commitment to centering people with lived experience in the fight for housing justice.

Thank you

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WORKSHOP 1

Tuesday, September 29 | 11:45 am – 12:30 pm

Portfolio Health Initiative: Examining the Status of Affordable Housing in Illinois

Heritage Hall 1

SPEAKERS: Maggie Cassidy, the Preservation Compact, Community Investment Corporation; Allison Clements, Illinois Housing Council; Rachel Weckbacher, Illinois Housing Council

Illinois Housing Council (IHC) and the Preservation Compact will present findings from the Portfolio Health Initiative, an effort to document the growing challenges facing the subsidized multifamily affordable housing industry in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. By exploring key risk factors, lessons learned, and emerging research on management practices and property performance, participants will learn proactive strategies, potential policy solutions, and practical tools to support long-term housing portfolio stability and preservation.

Lessons Learned: Collaborating on Homelessness Solutions in Peoria*

Heritage Hall 2

SPEAKER: Nicole Morrow, City of Peoria

Hear from the City of Peoria about the successes of their Flexible Rent Spending Program, offered from 2024-2026. By screening clients who are typically not served through traditional funding sources (like Permanent Supportive Housing or Rapid Re-Housing), this program enhanced HMIS data, filled gaps for shelter move-ins, increased housing stability, prevented evictions during financial hardships, and improved health outcomes. Attendees will explore strategies to build collaborative relationships with your local government and find flexible funding alternatives to provide the programming your community needs.

*Session approved for CE (continuing education) credits for LCSW, LSW, LCPC, and LPC licenses; please sign in with a staff member at the session to make sure you get credit.

In Conversation: Illinois Housing Counseling Coalition

Heritage Hall 5

FACILITATOR: James Miller, Housing Action Illinois

Join us for a meeting of the Illinois Housing Counseling Coalition (IHCC), a statewide network of housing counseling agencies dedicated to strengthening housing counseling services and advancing sustainable, equitable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households. Facilitated by Housing Action, the coalition is open to all Illinois housing counseling agencies. This interactive session will provide an opportunity to reflect on the IHCC's activities over the past year, discuss current priorities, and help shape future initiatives and advocacy efforts to better support housing counseling agencies across Illinois.

Ownership or Rip-Off? Promised a Home, Delivered a Trap

Heritage Hall 3 & 6

SPEAKERS: Blake Mitchell, HOPE Fair Housing Center; Katie Liss, Prairie State Legal Aid; Kate Walz, Housing Action Illinois

Fair housing groups are noticing a growing use of predatory Bond for Deed, or "rent-to-own," schemes targeting East St. Louis and other disinvested communities across Illinois. Learn how these deals work, why they strip wealth instead of building it, and how to identify warning signs. Panelists will share strategies to help families exit harmful contracts, investigate legal violations, and educate communities. Attendees will also explore emerging advocacy and policy solutions to stop these practices and restore fair, sustainable pathways to homeownership.

Housing Action Corps: Building Capacity and Leadership

Heritage Hall 4

SPEAKERS: Willie Heineke, Housing Action Illinois; Sherlina Chauhan, Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County; Sarah Leys, City of Rockford

Since 2010, Housing Action Illinois has supported more than 400 AmeriCorps VISTA members and 100 organizations on countless projects across Illinois and nationwide through

our Housing Action Corps. From launching new programs to growing volunteers and donors, Housing Action Corps members focus on year-long projects that help their host sites enhance their services, resources, and partnerships to meet community needs in new ways—all while providing professional development for the AmeriCorps members themselves. Hear from Housing Action Corps staff, host organizations, and alumni to learn how the AmeriCorps VISTA program can build your organization's capacity while recruiting emerging leaders into the housing field.



WORKSHOP II

Tuesday, September 29 | 2:30 pm – 3:45 pm

Land Banks: An Underutilized Resource

Heritage Hall 1

SPEAKERS: Mike Davis, Central Illinois Land Bank Authority; Alexander Benishek, City of Mattoon; Eric Setter, Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority

The first land banks in Illinois were founded in 2012 to acquire, hold, and transfer land to help revitalize communities across the state. Nearly 15 years later, land banks are still not utilized to their full potential. Join land bank and government leaders from across the state to discuss how municipalities and nonprofit organizations use land banks to redevelop communities, explore the different challenges in serving urban and rural communities, and examine the resources and legislation that would make land banks even more effective partners.

solutions to better support households facing extreme rent-to-income gaps. Participants will examine the structural challenges that make housing unaffordable, before engaging in a facilitated, large-group discussion to share strategies, programs, and barriers from their own work. Together, we will identify practical approaches and collective insights to better support individuals navigating housing instability in an increasingly difficult market.

**Session approved for CE (continuing education) credits for LCSW, LSW, LCPC, and LPC licenses; please sign in with a staff member at the session to make sure you get credit.*

When the Math Doesn't Work: Navigating Housing on SSI & Low Incomes*

Heritage Hall 2

SPEAKERS: Robert Gillespie, Helping Hands of Springfield; Elizabeth Barnes, Helping Hands of Springfield

As housing costs continue to rise, join this interactive session to gain practical strategies and peer-driven

Helping Others Without Losing Yourself: Burnout Prevention for Housing Counselors

Heritage Hall 5

SPEAKER: Julie Chavez, TJ Group

Housing counselors play a critical role in supporting families through foreclosure, eviction, and financial hardship—often facing high stress and burnout. Through interactive exercises, attendees will learn practical tools to recognize burnout, build resilience, and maintain effectiveness without sacrificing well-being. Join us to practice actionable techniques and build confidence in setting boundaries, managing caseload stress, and sustaining long-term client support.

The State of Fair Housing in Illinois

Heritage Hall 3 & 6

SPEAKERS: Dominic Voz, Open Communities; Michael Chavarria, HOPE Fair Housing Center; Emily Coffey, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

Take a deep dive into the evolving future of fair housing in Illinois. Attendees will learn about the history of the fair housing movement, the mechanisms that have sustained fair housing enforcement and recent efforts to weaken or dismantle them, and the growth of state and local fair housing law and enforcement infrastructure. Panelists will then examine the current existential challenges facing fair housing and share strategies for taking action in your community.

Reframing Problems for Social Change

Heritage Hall 4

Session runs from 2:30-4:00pm

SPEAKER: Sara Cantor, Greater Good Studio

As changemakers, many of us struggle with the most complex issues of our time. Systems of oppression are not only entrenched but interconnected. And even as we work to solve problems on the daily, a paralyzing thought can creep in: are we even solving the right problem? This workshop will give you concrete tools for starting or restarting your projects in a more strategic, action-oriented, and equitable way. You will learn and practice methods for mapping root causes, writing positive goals, and centering the people most impacted in your learning, co-creation, and efforts towards institutional change.



WORKSHOP III

Wednesday, September 30 | 8:30 am – 9:45 am

Local Focus: Planning & Development in Champaign-Urbana

Heritage Hall 1

SPEAKERS: Jim Roberts, Affordable Housing Developers/Consultants; Drew Martin, Hope Village; Rob Kowalski, City of Champaign; Damita Parsley, Cunningham Township & Bristol Place Resident

Strong community partnerships are at the core of successful affordable housing development in Champaign and Urbana. In this session, attendees will learn how developers partnered with the City, University of Illinois, and other local institutions to provide affordable and permanent supportive housing needed in the community. Hear from a developer, civic planner, and community leader about the strategy and logistics behind two recent projects: Bristol Place Residences, an affordable housing neighborhood in Champaign funded with LIHTC; and Hope Village, a Permanent Supportive Housing “small home” development in Urbana. This session will also feature insights from a new resident in Bristol Place Residences who will share their journey towards securing affordable, safe housing.

The Home Illinois Plan: Looking Back at Accomplishments and Planning for the Future*

Heritage Hall 2

SPEAKERS: Eugenia Olson, IDPH; Brenda O’Connell, IHDA; Michael Banghart, OPEH/HFS

September 2026 marks five years since Governor Pritzker signed an Executive Order creating the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH), the Interagency Taskforce on Homelessness, and the Home Illinois Plan. Join OPEH staff to review successes to date and lessons learned from the first two Home Illinois Plans. Attendees will learn critical updates and policy priorities related to the new iteration of the Home Illinois Plan, which addresses ongoing challenges from the federal level regarding maintaining resources and benefits, as well as how the State will support local systems of care to continue making progress towards a world where homelessness only lives in history books.

* Session approved for CE (continuing education) credits for LCSW, LSW, LCPC, and LPC licenses; please sign in with a staff member at the session to make sure you get credit.



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Meet Our Team



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Navigating Federal Changes in Housing Counseling

Heritage Hall 5

SPEAKERS: Sandy Deters, ERBA; Marilda Eadie, ERBA; Liz Werning, Lake County Housing Authority; Julie Rice, HUD

Stay informed about the latest federal updates affecting housing counseling services and recent changes to major federal housing loan and assistance programs, including Family Self-Sufficiency, FHA, VA, USDA, and Public Housing Authority (PHA) programs. Geared towards housing counselors, program managers, and other housing professionals, this session will share how federal program updates, policy shifts, and changes in eligibility criteria will impact homebuyers, homeowners, renters, and housing counselors. Attendees will gain practical insights and tools to adapt to evolving federal regulations while continuing to support clients and provide accurate, up-to-date counseling.

Increasing Housing Supply: How We Keep Making Progress

Heritage Hall 3 & 6

SPEAKERS: Ben Wolfenstein, YIMBY Illinois; Martin Cozzola, Impact for Equity; Ryan Gruenenfelder, AARP; Bob Palmer, Housing Action Illinois

Expanding the overall supply of housing is a crucial strategy to increasing housing affordability and improving the lives of individuals and families. The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act becoming federal law is a sign of growing bipartisan awareness of this. However, discussions

about housing supply are often challenged by competing priorities, such as prioritizing local zoning control and protecting the interests of current residents. In this session, attendees will learn how to navigate and responsibly respond to these issues with guidance from speakers who are advocating in support of increased housing supply across the state and in their local communities.

From Pain Point to Partnership: Exploring Strategic Collaboration

Heritage Hall 4

SPEAKER: Caroline Manley, Forefront; Dixon Romeo, Southside Together

Strategic partnerships can help nonprofits address persistent challenges, expand their capabilities, and increase their impact, but collaboration is not one-size-fits-all. This session will examine the spectrum of strategic partnerships—from informal alliances and shared services to deeper organizational integration—and discuss common catalysts, barriers, and conditions that help collaborations succeed. Leaders from Southside Together will share their firsthand experience with merging two organizations, including a candid discussion of the process and lessons learned, as well as the increased capacity and community impact since the merger. Participants will then learn a framework to identify an organizational challenge, consider the skills needed, and explore what type of partnerships could provide a solution. Alongside practical tools for collaboration, the session will also introduce free legal, financial management, research, and partnership services available to eligible Illinois nonprofits through the Nonprofit Resilience Hub.



WORKSHOP IV

Wednesday, September 30 | 10:15 am – 11:30 am

Champaign Community Tour

10-11:30am | Off-Site | Pre-registration required

SPEAKERS: Jim Roberts, Affordable Housing Developers/Consultants; Drew Martin, Hope Village; Rob Kowalski, City of Champaign

Join us for an insider's look at two local developments: Bristol Place Residences and Hope Village. Designed around public streets, alleys, and a park, Bristol Place Residences is an affordable LIHTC neighborhood that includes single-family homes and a multifamily building for low-income seniors. Hope Village is a



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Save the Date!

40th Anniversary Benefit: Legacy in Action

Thursday, April 29, 2027

Chicago Architecture Center
Chicago, IL

2027 Housing Matters

**Thursday, October 21 –
Friday, October 22, 2027**

DoubleTree by Hilton
Bloomington, IL

Permanent Supportive Housing development for people experiencing homelessness with medical needs, offering 30 small homes built around a community building. Participants will take a bus to explore both locations while hearing directly from developers and leaders about how these projects are helping strengthen and stabilize the Champaign-Urbana community.

Responding to and Impacting the Uncertain Federal Landscape for Homeless Services

Heritage Hall 2

SPEAKERS: **Max Seeley**, SHPA; **Katie Spoden Eighan**, Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County; **Bob Palmer**, Housing Action Illinois

For at least the past year, the principles and programs that have provided the federal level foundation for state and local efforts to prevent and end homelessness have been under attack. Advocates, providers and others have been working together to counter the arguments against Housing First and keep the focus on the importance of creating more affordable housing, particularly permanent supportive housing, as the best long-term solution to ending homelessness in our society. At this session, we will discuss the latest on our collective advocacy efforts and provide an opportunity for providers to discuss how they are keeping a focus on serving people in need during times of stress and uncertainty.

Beyond HUD: Diversifying Funding Streams in Uncertain Times

Heritage Hall 5

SPEAKER: **Sandy Deters**, ERBA

As federal funding becomes increasingly restricted and uncertain, organizations must rethink how they sustain and grow their critical services. Join us for real-world examples and hands-on exercises that explore how participants can align their programs with alternative funding opportunities—including health systems, financial institutions, local governments, philanthropy, and fee-for-service models—while maintaining mission integrity and client accessibility. By reviewing practical, actionable strategies and cross-sector opportunities, attendees will leave with a clearer roadmap to stabilize and expand their funding base.

Mapping Illinois Housing Challenges: Using Data to Inform Policy and Investment

Heritage Hall 3 & 6

SPEAKERS: **Geoff Smith**, Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University; **Emily Bloom-Carlin**, Metropolitan Planning Council

Explore emerging research on how housing challenges vary across Illinois while gaining practical tools to assess local housing needs, apply data-driven solutions, and learn from peer communities to identify proven strategies and avoid common pitfalls. Drawing on a new statewide typology and data analysis effort, panelists will discuss how localized insights can inform more effective policy, investment, and housing strategies, as well as how practitioners can leverage data to address supply constraints in diverse markets.

The Responsible Innovation Blueprint: Aligning AI Adoption with Your Mission

Heritage Hall 4

SPEAKER: **Steve Casey**, Kindred Impact LLC

Join us as we walk through an 8-Week AI Governance Blueprint—a step-by-step toolkit to guide your organization from informal AI use to implementing a structured, mission-aligned policy. We'll discuss a four-stage framework that ensures AI enhances efficiency while preserving the human-centered nature of programs provided by housing and homelessness organizations.

ABOUT US



Housing Action Illinois is a statewide coalition that has been leading the movement to end homelessness, address the shortage of affordable rental housing, and expand homeownership opportunities in Illinois for nearly 40 years. Our 200+ member organizations include housing counseling agencies, homeless service providers, developers of affordable housing, and policymakers. We bring everyone together to work toward our vision of an Illinois where everyone has a stable, good home.

Staff

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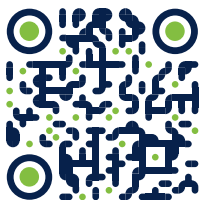
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Jackie Newman
Springfield Housing Authority,
Springfield

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BEDS Plus, La Grange

Margaret Wooten
Reach CDC, Chicago

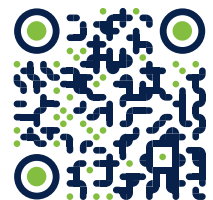


**Organizational
Members**

SCAN or VISIT:
bit.ly/2026MemberList

2025 Annual Report

SCAN or VISIT:
bit.ly/2025HAIAnnualReport





WHAT WE DO

EDUCATE housing nonprofits by providing professional training, resources, and one-on-one guidance.

ADVOCATE for policies and funding to prevent and end homelessness and expand affordable housing opportunities for renters and homeownership.

STRENGTHEN our members and our field by securing resources, fostering collaboration, and creating long-term housing solutions.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Ending Homelessness

- ✓ **Protecting HOME Illinois:** During the past state legislative assembly, we joined partners to successfully defend HOME Illinois (our state plan and investment in preventing and ending homelessness) from a proposed \$10 million cut, keeping funding at \$263.7 million. Given that Illinois still faces a shortage of more than 4,000 shelter beds and more than 21,000 rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing units, protecting this funding matters enormously.

Expanding & Protecting Affordable Rental Housing

- ✓ **Cracking Down on Junk Fees in Rental Housing:** We co-led the advocacy campaign to pass a new law that requires landlords to list all non-optional fees on the first page of rental agreements and prohibits 11 fees deemed unnecessary. For renters on tight budgets, this kind of transparency can make a real difference when comparing options and understanding the true cost of a lease.

Sustainable Homeownership

- ✓ **Empowering housing counseling agencies:** In 2025, the Housing Action Counseling Network distributed subgrants and provided guidance to 34 agencies across 6 states and Washington, D.C., collectively serving 12,500+ households. We also helped 13 housing counseling agencies successfully undergo federal monitoring and the approval process.
- ✓ **Educating housing counselors:** In 2025, we trained 600+ housing counselors nationwide in 28 workshops. We built the pipeline of new housing counselors through our Housing Counseling Career Path, preparing 78 participants to take the HUD certification exam.

- ✓ **Investing \$250 Million in Missing Middle and Affordable Housing:** The capital budget includes \$250 million for missing middle and affordable housing programs, originally proposed as part of the BUILD proposal.
- ✓ **Reforming Illinois' Property Tax System:** This legislation is the most sweeping reform to Illinois' property tax sale in decades, and passing it represents three years of sustained advocacy by Housing Action and our partners. The new law brings Illinois into compliance with a landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling and creates fairer processes to help homeowners keep their equity and stay in their homes. Most significantly, it phases out private tax buying in Cook County by 2031, ending a system that has long stripped wealth and stability from homeowners, particularly in Black communities.

Educating & Equipping Communities

- ✓ **Building a pipeline of talent for our field:** We recently welcomed 41 AmeriCorps VISTA members serving at 32 organizations across 6 states for our 2026–2027 cohort. Our 2025–2026 cohort just wrapped up a year of service, and of our 31 initial members, 21 were hired on by host sites or are continuing to work with organizations in our field.
- ✓ **Fostering collaboration:** In 2025, we began to serve as the fiscal agent and a strategic partner for the newly-formed Illinois Housing Equity Collective, created to sustain the fair housing movement and advance housing equity across Illinois.
- ✓ **Advancing IL CRA implementation:** We hosted in-person Illinois Community Reinvestment Act (IL CRA) roundtables for community organizations and financial institutions, briefed credit unions on their new obligations, and published a toolkit on building partnerships with local lenders.

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