



## Tenant Empowerment Act of 2024

*Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07), Ranking Member Maxine Waters (CA-43), and  
Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib (MI-12)*

### BACKGROUND

In the midst of an unprecedented affordable housing crisis, millions of cost-burdened families in America have seen their lives improved as a result of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s public and assisted rental housing programs. However, for some HUD residents, housing comes at the cost of their health, safety, and well-being. Too many residents face ongoing issues with the physical condition of their homes due to chronic underfunding, a lack of capacity for proper oversight and enforcement, and non-compliance with HUD requirements by some property owners. Across the country, some tenants have been forced to live in substandard conditions, lacking sufficient hot water, reliable heat, or a roof that keeps out rain and snow. Tenants of color, in particular, are disproportionately impacted by health-related hazards in their homes such as mold, allergens, lead, and poor air quality.

Safe, stable, and affordable housing should be a right and reality for every person in America. For decades, federally assisted tenants have organized, strategized, and demanded more robust protections to improve substandard and unsafe housing conditions, stop retaliation, and hold housing providers accountable for neglectful and unfair practices. Congress must heed their calls. It is time for a comprehensive approach to equity and justice in housing that centers the fair treatment of tenants, enforcement of their rights, and ensured housing stability.

**The Tenant Empowerment Act** would empower tenants with the tools they need to hold HUD and providers accountable for poor housing conditions and improve the quality of their homes by:

- Enabling tenants living in project-based voucher housing to hold their rent contribution in escrow if HUD determines a unit is in serious violation of safe housing standards with the option of a negotiated rent release if the project owner reaches measurable repairs benchmarks;
- Provide tenants with the right to judicial enforcement of project owner agreements with HUD to ensure they address serious violations of housing standards or repeated violations of other program requirements, including the rights of residents to organize;
- Fund tenant participation services, such as outreach and training of tenants and technical assistance;
- Extend right to organize protections to tenants in project-based voucher buildings;
- Establish a national repair and deduct policy for housing choice voucher holders.