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Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County aims to improve home affordability in Frederick County through new national advocacy campaign

Habitat organizations across the country are mobilizing to influence policy and system changes at the federal, state and local levels

FREDERICK, MD (June 12, 2019) — Nearly 19 million households across the United States are spending at least half of their income on a place to live, often forgoing basic necessities such as food and health care to make ends meet. In Frederick County, the ALICE report from the United Way tells us that 34,688 households, or 39% of our local population cannot afford basic needs such as housing, child care, food, transportation and health care. The stability that housing should bring continues to remain out of reach for many people.

On Wednesday, Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County joined Habitat organizations across the country to launch a new national advocacy campaign aimed at improving home affordability for 10 million people in the U.S. over the next five years.

Marking significant growth in Habitat's commitment to ensuring that everyone has a safe and decent place to call home, the Cost of Home campaign seeks to identify and improve policies and systems through coordinated advocacy efforts at the local, state and federal levels.

Cost of Home focuses on improving housing affordability across the housing continuum in four specific policy areas: increasing supply and preservation of affordable homes, equitably increasing access to credit, optimizing land use for affordable homes, and ensuring access to and development of communities of opportunity.

Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County already has taken steps toward these goals. The local organization has advocated in the past for a change to the County's Impact Fee structure, and is now asking local residents to join that effort through the Cost of Home campaign. Frederick County is one of the only counties in the State that has 'flat-rate' impact fees, meaning the fee is the same regardless of size, type, density, location or any other factor on the home. A nonprofit homebuilder like Habitat for Humanity can waive these fees; however, if they do so, the fee passes to the low-income homebuyer as a lien on their home. The result is that these flat-rate impact fees have a regressive effect, falling disproportionately on those with lower incomes. As part of this campaign, Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County is continuing to advocate that the County Council revise the legislation on Impact Fees to make them more affordable for lower-income homebuyers.

“Seeing the results of the United Way’s ALICE Report, and reading the Community Foundation of Frederick’s recent Human Needs Assessment, we know there is a large number of people struggling to make ends meet right here in Frederick County. Every day at Habitat we see the faces and hear the voices of people who are in desperate need of help and relief,” said Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County’s Executive Director, Ron Cramer. “No one should pay have to choose home over health or a child’s daycare or education. We can do better!”

More details about Habitat’s Cost of Home policy platform and campaign activation are available at **[habitat.org/costofhome](https://www.habitat.org/costofhome)**. For more information, or to speak to Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County about the campaign, please contact Ron Cramer at ron.cramer@frederickhabitat.org or 301-698-2449.



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