

HEALTH NOTE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing Element, Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2020, Bill 24-0001 Council of the District of Columbia, Council Period 24

What is the goal of this health note?

Decisions made in sectors such as housing, land use planning, education, and employment can affect health and well-being. The Health Impact Project at The Pew Charitable Trusts is using a new approach, called health notes, to help lawmakers learn the potential health implications of proposed legislation and policies. The Health Impact Project developed this health note as one additional source of information for the Council of the District of Columbia to consider regarding Bill 24-0001, the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2020.

What would the housing element of Bill 24-0001 do?

B24-0001 updates the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The plan's Housing Element (Chapter 5) aims to promote housing affordability and further fair housing opportunities, especially in high-cost areas of the city.

What did the health note find?

There is a shortage of affordable housing in Washington, D.C., particularly for low-income households. More than 20% of all D.C. households faced severe housing cost burdens in 2017, meaning that they spent more than half of their income on housing, and another 16% spent more than 30% to 50% of their income on housing.¹ Housing cost burden is more common among lower income D.C. residents.²

This health note examined nine new or updated components of the comprehensive plan's housing element. Key findings from this review include:^a

- There is **strong evidence** that housing insecurity and unaffordability can harm physical and mental health. Frequent moves due to rising area housing costs are linked to stress and poor health, while displacement is associated with increased hospital or emergency room visits.³ Conversely, housing security can help facilitate effective management of chronic health conditions such as diabetes.⁴
- High-cost D.C. neighborhoods lack affordable housing and other neighborhoods are experiencing concentrated poverty. To the extent that updates to the Comprehensive Plan address these issues, low-income residents could experience health benefits. **Strong**

^a See full health note for definitions of the strength of evidence categories.

evidence demonstrates that neighborhood conditions can influence residents' health, including documented effects on mortality, depression, mental health, and birth outcomes.⁵ For example, there is **strong evidence** that living in socioeconomically disadvantaged and racially segregated neighborhoods is associated with negative health effects such as cardiovascular illness, pre-term birth, and low birthweight, especially for Black Americans.⁶

- There is **mixed evidence** regarding the effects of relocating from areas of concentrated poverty to lower-poverty neighborhoods on health outcomes and factors that shape health.⁷ While much of the research on mobility has focused on effects for adolescents and adults, recent research suggests that relocating to higher-income neighborhoods could have the greatest potential benefits for young children.⁸ Some studies show that housing assistance that allows recipients to move to higher quality housing or high-opportunity neighborhoods can mitigate the negative health effects for adults and children associated with housing insecurity and unaffordability.⁹ There is **some evidence** that counseling and other supports can help low-income families sustain benefits of moving to high-opportunity communities.¹⁰ The extent to which the Comprehensive Plan updates would result in low-income families relocating to higher-income neighborhoods is unclear.

Which populations are most likely to be affected?

As a result of historical discrimination and systemic racism, people of color are more likely to reside in communities that are racially segregated, economically disadvantaged, and that have limited access to resources important for health and well-being such as educational or employment opportunities, health care, or social services.¹¹ Approximately 67% of extremely low-income D.C. households—whose incomes fall below 30% of the area's median family income (D.C.'s median family income was \$126,000 for a family of four in 2020)—are severely housing cost-burdened, meaning that they spend more than 50% of their income on housing.¹² Fourteen percent of Black D.C. residents surveyed in 2019 reported having last moved due to inability to pay a bank or landlord.¹³

The complete health note is available at https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/external-sites/health-impact-project/2021/health-note_dc-b24-0001_comprehensive-plan-update-housing_final2.pdf.

Methods Summary: Health notes provide brief, objective, and nonpartisan summaries of how proposed legislation could affect health. To complete this health note, Health Impact Project staff conducted an expedited literature review using a systematic approach to minimize bias and identify studies to answer each of the identified research questions. The strength of the evidence is qualitatively described and categorized as: not well researched, mixed evidence, a fair amount of evidence, strong evidence, or very strong evidence. A detailed description of the methods and a full list of sources are provided in the complete health note.

Endnotes

- ¹ Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2020, Housing Element, B23-0736, Council of the District of Columbia (2020), <https://trackbill.com/bill/district-of-columbia-bill-736-comprehensive-plan-amendment-act-of-2020/1921194/#/details=true>.
- ² Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development, "DC Housing Survey Report: A Supplement to the Assessment of the Need for Large Units in the District of Columbia" (2019), https://dmped.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dmped/publication/attachments/Formatted DC Housing Survey Report FINAL 6-24_1.pdf.
- ³ L. Kalousová and M. Evangelist, "Rent Assistance and Health: Findings from Detroit," *Housing Studies* (2019), doi:10.1080/02673037.2018.1441977; S. Lim et al., "Impact of Residential Displacement on Healthcare Access and Mental Health among Original Residents of Gentrifying Neighborhoods in New York City," *PLoS One* 12, no. 12 (2017): e0190139-e39, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29272306> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5741227/>; D. Hernández and C.B. Swope, "Housing as a Platform for Health and Equity: Evidence and Future Directions," *American Journal of Public Health* 109 (2019).
- ⁴ D.E. Keene, M. Guo, and S. Murillo, "'That Wasn't Really a Place to Worry About Diabetes': Housing Access and Diabetes Self-Management among Low-Income Adults," *Social Science & Medicine* 197 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.11.051>.
- ⁵ M.C. Arcaya et al., "Research on Neighborhood Effects on Health in the United States: A Systematic Review of Study Characteristics," *Social Science & Medicine* 168 (2016): 16-29.
- ⁶ S. Barber et al., "Neighborhood Disadvantage, Poor Social Conditions, and Cardiovascular Disease Incidence among African American Adults in the Jackson Heart Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 106, no. 12 (2016): 2219-26; C. Cubbin et al., "Longitudinal Measures of Neighborhood Poverty and Income Inequality Are Associated with Adverse Birth Outcomes in Texas," *Social Science & Medicine* 245 (2020): 112665; C.N. Ncube et al., "Association of Neighborhood Context with Offspring Risk of Preterm Birth and Low Birthweight: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Population-Based Studies," *Social Science & Medicine* 153 (2016): 156-64; S. Warren Andersen et al., "Associations between Neighborhood Environment, Health Behaviors, and Mortality," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 54, no. 1 (2018): 87-95; D.P. Do, R. Frank, and J. Iceland, "Black-White Metropolitan Segregation and Self-Rated Health: Investigating the Role of Neighborhood Poverty," *Social Science & Medicine* 187 (2017): 85-92, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953617303799>.
- ⁷ Q.C. Nguyen et al., "The Effects of a Housing Mobility Experiment on Participants' Residential Environments," *Housing Policy Debate* 27, no. 3 (2017): 419-48; Q.C. Nguyen et al., "Heterogeneous Effects of Housing Vouchers on the Mental Health of Us Adolescents," *American Journal of Public Health* 106, no. 4 (2016): 755-62, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26794179> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4986050/>; S. DeLuca and P. Rosenblatt, "Walking Away from the Wire: Housing Mobility and Neighborhood Opportunity in Baltimore," *Housing Policy Debate* 27, no. 4 (2017): 519-46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2017.1282884>; D. Brisson, S. Lechuga Peña, and M. Plassmeyer, "Prioritizing Choice: Perceptions of Neighborhood Social Cohesion for Residents in Subsidized Housing," *Journal of Social Service Research* 44, no. 3 (2018): 267-78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2018.1457592>; L. Buron, D.K. Levy, and M. Gallagher, "Housing Choice Vouchers. How Hope Vi Families Fared in the Private Market" (Urban Institute, 2007), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/46296/311487-Housing-Choice-Vouchers.PDF>; R. Chetty and N. Hendren, "The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility I: Childhood Exposure Effects*," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133, no. 3 (2018): 1107-62, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjy007>.
- ⁸ Chetty and Hendren, "The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility I: Childhood Exposure Effects*."
- ⁹ A. Fenelon et al., "Housing Assistance Programs and Adult Health in the United States," *American Journal of Public Health* 107, no. 4 (2017): 571-78, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28207335> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5343706/>; K.A. Ahrens et al., "Housing Assistance and Blood Lead Levels: Children in the United States, 2005-2012," *American Journal of Public Health* 106, no. 11 (2016): 2049-56, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27631737> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5055789/>; N. Slopen et al., "Housing Assistance and Child Health: A Systematic Review," *Pediatrics* 141, no. 6 (2018): e20172742, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/141/6/e20172742.abstract>.
- ¹⁰ Y. Aratani et al., "Housing Subsidies and Early Childhood Development: A Comprehensive Review of Policies and Demonstration Projects," *Housing Policy Debate* 29, no. 2 (2019): 319-42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2018.1515099>; DeLuca and Rosenblatt, "Walking Away from the Wire: Housing Mobility and Neighborhood Opportunity in Baltimore."
- ¹¹ S.B. Scott et al., "Perceived Neighborhood Characteristics Predict Severity and Emotional Response to Daily Stressors," *Soc Sci Med* 200 (2018): 262-70. Hernández and Swope, "Housing as a Platform for Health and Equity: Evidence and Future Directions."
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- ¹³ Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development, "DC Housing Survey Report."