

Direct Mail Appeal Letter and Reply Form Copy

Dear <<Friend>>,

We are all feeling the effects of inflation and the supply chain crisis through our trips to the grocery store and when filling up our gas tanks.

But these increased costs are especially hard on our neighbors living with low income in Washington, DC. As they endure these extreme hikes on necessities, they're disproportionately faced with major barriers to another—and, too often, unnamed—necessity: housing.

Because housing is treated as a commodity—rather than as a human right—tens of millions of Americans, including many of our neighbors in DC, struggle to keep roofs over their heads. Meanwhile, they continue to be evicted from their homes without legal protection, affordable housing is greatly outnumbered by those who need it, and individuals experiencing homelessness are unjustly criminalized.

At [CLIENT], we believe that just like food, water, and clothing, shelter is a basic human right. By giving at a time of unprecedented hardship for so many of our clients, you've affirmed that every person is entitled to the basic material resources they need for growth—and that includes a place to call their own.

<<Friend>>, that's why I'm reaching out to you. Will you support our DC neighbors' right to housing by making a gift today?

Countless studies back it up: housing correlates to good physical and mental health. The opposite is also true—and a lack of housing has devastating consequences for our well-being. Wrongly, it's the harsh reality for too many of our DC neighbors.

Over the last year, rents in the U.S. have increased by seventeen percent. In DC, the rate is twenty-three percent. This increase is despite the devastating economic impact COVID-19 has had on DC's residents who are living with low income and struggle to afford housing costs in the city they've long called home.

Despite our city's efforts to increase access to housing, DC continues to have one of the steepest rates of chronic homelessness in the country, and the difference is stark across racial lines. In DC, 86 percent of people experiencing homelessness are Black—nearly double the alarmingly high national rate of 45 percent.

Unsurprisingly, research shows that people experiencing homelessness in their fifties and sixties often suffer from health conditions seen in housed people twenty years older, such as heart disease and late-stage cancer. I'm sure you'll agree—this state of inequity is unacceptable.

As many in our country lament rising costs of basic needs, many of our Black and brown neighbors in DC have known all too well—and for far too long—the hardship of unaffordability. I know you've seen the tents on city streets. Or maybe you know someone who is one missed

paycheck away from an eviction notice. But you have the power to help more DC residents get and keep the housing they need to thrive.

By making a gift today, you'll enable [CLIENT] to address housing insecurity from as many angles as possible—and, in that way, help our clients on their paths to self-determination.

You'll enable our staff to provide clients with the guidance and information they need to apply for affordable housing. You'll support our housing advocacy efforts, which include helping tenants in landlord-tenant and subsidized housing cases—and which, thanks to your abiding support, we were able to maintain even when the pandemic was at its height.

And, because of you, our organizers will be able to continue advocating for policies that preserve and create affordable housing in DC by building coalitions, engaging public officials, and working with tenants as they organize to protect their homes.

You'll also support our staff's work in our [REGION] Center, which serves Ward 8, where the pandemic has been most deadly. By making a gift, you'll enable us to continue running critical services out of the [REGION] Center, such as our Diaper Program, which runs twice a week and provides each client household with fifty diapers a month.

And you'll bolster our other Social Services Programs, like our Pre-Employment Program, which provides clients with life coaching, case management, and job training and placement, and Women Empowered, wherein clients are invited to achieve wellness of mind, body, and spirit.

<<Friend>>, by giving in a time of intense and unprecedented need, you've shown that you refuse to ignore the growing inequity endured by our Black and brown DC neighbors—and that by working together, we can help residents living with low income determine their own futures. As difficult times persist, I hope you'll consider making a gift in support of our DC community.

Thank you, in advance, for helping us ensure that no one in our community has to choose between putting food on the table or a roof over their heads.

With gratitude,

[NAME]
Chief Executive Officer

P.S. At [CLIENT], we consider housing a human right, and we know you feel the same. By making a gift today, you'll help us continue providing the services our neighbors living with low income need to determine their own futures with community, dignity, and a wealth of resources. Please, be as generous as possible.

Reply Form:

My Gift to My DC Neighbors

YES, I want to make a gift in support of housing rights. To strengthen [CLIENT]'s advocacy work, services, and commitment to empowering all DC community members, I'm making a gift of:

<\$Ask1> <\$Ask2> <\$Ask3> Other \$_____

Handwritten: With your gift, you'll support programs that positively impact every part of our clients' lives.