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AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS OUT OF REACH IN COLORADO FOR LOW-WAGE WORKERS

To afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent in Colorado, full-time workers need to earn \$26.45 per hour or work 71 hours a week at current Colorado minimum wage. This is Colorado's 2020 Housing Wage, revealed in the [Out of Reach](#) national report released today by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), a research and advocacy organization dedicated solely to achieving affordable and decent homes for the lowest income people.

This year's Out of Reach report comes during a time when the connection between housing and health has never been more clear. With stay at home orders mandated as a key factor is stopping the spread of COVID-19, having a stable home has never been more important to protect individual and community safety. Prior to the pandemic, more than [120 thousand extremely low-income households](#) were spending more than half of their limited incomes on housing costs, sacrificing other necessities to do so. The compounding of high job losses and the lack of access to proper healthcare and resources considerably depleted already limited resources and access.

In the past few months alone, millions of households have dealt with a decline in wages through layoffs, furloughs, or decreased work hours and many will struggle to afford their rents. Other data shows that as many as 400,000 Coloradans could be subject to evictions in the coming weeks which will only increase the number of people entering the cycle of homelessness. There are no states, metropolitan areas, and ZIP codes in the country where renters can afford a home at Fair Market without spending more than 30% of income on housing costs. The severe shortage of affordable and available rental homes is still prevalent

"There is a new appreciation in our communities for workers in roles deemed essential during the pandemic, but often these jobs do not make the necessary Housing Wage to afford to live in Colorado," said Cathy Alderman, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless vice president of communications and public policy. "Countless grocery store workers, hospital housekeepers, and delivery drivers are spending more than half of their wages on housing, leaving them vulnerable to homelessness if they were to miss a paycheck due to illness or receive a large hospital bill."

As the report shows, although Colorado's minimum wage of \$12.00 per hour is above the stagnant federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, minimum wage renters must work at least 71 hours per week

to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent of \$1103. Even more out of reach for low wage workers with families, is a two-bedroom apartment for the Fair Market Rent of \$1375, with minimum wage renters needing to work at least 88 hours per week, or have 2.2 full-time jobs.

The typical renter in Colorado earns \$19.49, which is just shy of \$7 less than the hourly wage needed to afford a modest unit. The economic downturn spurred by the coronavirus further increased the risk of housing instability for millions of low-wage renters at a time when stable housing is vital. Millions of renters were one financial shock away from housing instability, and for many the pandemic and economic fallout is that shock.

“Housing is a basic human need, but millions of people in America can’t afford a safe, stable home.” said Diane Yentel NLIHC president and CEO. “The harm and trauma of this enduring challenge is laid bare during COVID-19, when millions of people in America risk losing their homes during a pandemic. The lack of affordable homes for the lowest-income people is one of our country’s most urgent and solvable challenges, during and after COVID-19; we lack only the political courage to fund the solutions at the scale necessary. It’s time for Congress to act.”

For additional information, visit: <http://www.nlihc.org/oor>

About the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

The mission of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless is to work collaboratively toward the prevention of homelessness and the creation of lasting solutions for people experiencing and at-risk of homelessness throughout Colorado. The Coalition advocates for and provides a continuum of housing and a variety of services to improve the health, well-being and stability of those it serves. Since its founding more than 30 years ago, the organization has earned state and national recognition for its integrated healthcare, housing, and service programs. The Coalition’s comprehensive approach addresses the causes of homelessness, as well as the consequences, offering critical assistance to over 20,000 individuals and families each year. Learn more at www.coloradocoalition.org.

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