



THE HOUSING ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

For a democracy to be by the people working for the people, it needs advocacy. According to Webster's dictionary, advocacy is "The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal."

There are municipalities larger than the state of Delaware that have made huge strides in producing more appropriate and safe housing and significantly lowering the number of people sleeping on the streets and in shelters. Delaware can and will do better if we as advocates utilize the tools in our Advocacy Toolkit to inform our elected officials of what we need from them. We are the people who elect them to represent us.

So, what is Housing Alliance Delaware (HAD) asking of you? We suggest you read through this toolkit, sign up to be a housing advocate, and get involved. It took the whole community to create the housing crisis. It will take all of us, working together, to find our way out.

To sign up to be a housing advocate click here:

[Become a Housing Advocate | HAD Site](#)

Special Thanks : Housing Alliance Delaware would like to thank our colleagues in Prosperity, Indiana for their permission to use their Advocacy Toolkit template to create this one for Delaware.

THE DELAWARE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Basics: Structure & Function

The Delaware General Assembly is the state legislature of Delaware. It is a bicameral or two- chamber legislature. Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate come from every district throughout the state. This is not to be confused with the United States Congress that also consists of a House of Representatives and a Senate, whose legislators come from every state in the nation.

The Delaware General Assembly meets annually at the Statehouse in Dover from January to June. Most committee meetings and legislative votes take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays.

Members of the General Assembly are elected from districts that are redrawn every 10 years based upon census results. These districts do not align perfectly with Delaware counties or municipalities. Representatives are elected to serve terms of two years and senators are elected to serve terms of four years. The Delaware General Assembly is a part-time legislature, which both describes its seasonal nature and implies that many state legislators have a second source of income or second job.

You can identify who your state legislators are by using the [Districts Lookup Tool | Delaware Department of Elections - GIS](#). You can contact your state representatives by utilizing information or tools on their caucus webpage or by looking up their name at [House Assembly Members - Delaware General Assembly](#) or [Senate Assembly Members - Delaware General Assembly](#).

Nonprofit Rules to Know

Community Education provides context and additional information about things such as need and impact, without making or alluding to a specific request for policy action.

Lobbying is making or alluding to a specific piece of legislation when interacting with or facilitating interactions with state and federal legislators.

501 (c) 3 organizations can do both, but if you lobby, you may need to do annual reporting of the hours you spend on it.

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Need Help?

Visit [Bolder Advocacy - Alliance for Justice](#) or call their free legal hotline for advice on advocacy/lobbying: 866.675.6229

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

A Bill is Introduced by a Legislator in Either Chamber, the House or Senate.

Legislators send drafts or ideas to the Legislative Services Agency by a specified deadline. When finalized, they 'drop' the public.



Keep A Watchful Eye

For better or worse, no bill is ever truly 'dead' until the end of the legislative session because it could be added to another bill via an amendment.

1st Chamber Committee

A bill is assigned to a committee by leadership. It must be called for a hearing, debated, and voted on to move forward. It can be amended.

Reading in Full & Vote 1st Chamber

A bill must be called for once again. It may be debated & amended again.

2nd Chamber Committee

A bill is assigned to a committee by leadership. It must be called for a hearing, debated, and voted on to move forward. It can be amended.

Reading in Full & Vote 2nd Chamber

A bill must be called for once again. It may be debated & amended again.

If no amendments are made the bill is sent to the Governor

Reading in Full & Vote 2nd Chamber

A bill must be called for once again. It may be debated & amended again.

Sent to Governor

The Governor has 7 days to react to the bill. If S/H/T vetoes the law, it requires a 2/3 vote to override the Governor and become law. If S/H/T signs the bill or simply lets it sit on his/her/their desk, it becomes law.

Housing Alliance Delaware's Policy Priorities

- **Increasing state and federal funding for affordable housing**

We believe that the #1 crisis in Delaware deserves 1% of the state budget. Delaware is short 20,000+ affordable housing units for current residents. More public funds/subsidies are needed to ensure that affordable rentals and homes for sale are brought online for working people and families. Due to the cost of construction, land, development, etc. affordable housing is only possible with local, state, and/or federal support. Delaware's financial investment in affordable housing has not increased for decades.

- **Reforming land use and zoning practices to encourage affordable housing development**

Land use laws and practices in Delaware make it time-consuming, difficult, and costly to develop

the affordable housing that our communities desperately need. Local and state governments should reform their land use practices and zoning laws to encourage more affordable housing development. Examples include inclusionary zoning, increasing density, allowing by-right affordable housing, and encouraging affordable housing with financial or regulatory incentives.

- **Protecting the rights of people experiencing homelessness, and implementing data-driven solutions to homelessness**

Homelessness has continued to increase in Delaware since 2019. The number of people sleeping outdoors has increased significantly. Solutions to this crisis, like housing first, harm reduction, street outreach, and supportive housing should be deployed to respond to this crisis. We oppose any efforts that criminalize homelessness, penalize people for being unhoused, or move unhoused people from one place to another without providing meaningful housing and services.

- **Enhancing Tenant Rights & Protections**

Tenants deserve to have their rights protected, and to be able to seek and receive relief when their safety and/or rights are violated by property owners. There are many neighboring cities and states that have stronger renter protections that Delaware should implement, including "pay to stay" laws and just cause eviction protections.

- **Increasing Delaware's Supply of Supportive Housing**

Supportive housing is an evidence-based solution to homelessness for people with high service needs, including seniors, and people with behavioral, mental, developmental, and physical disabilities. Supportive housing combines financial help (paying rent) with supportive services. When implemented using the evidence-based housing first model, supportive housing solves homelessness for the most vulnerable, providing them with safe and dignified housing as well as individually tailored support services. Delaware's stock of supportive housing is not sufficient to meet the needs of Delaware's residents.

Talking Points: Increasing State & Federal Funding for Affordable Housing

The Bottom-Line Angle

- Everyone needs a safe place to sleep at night.
- Our community thrives when everyone is housed.
- Homes are where employees go to sleep at night.

The Public Opinion Angle

- 63% of Americans strongly support repurposing available empty spaces like office buildings or motels to ensure that everyone has a place to sleep.
- 80% of residents in rural areas and 72% in urban areas believe housing affordability is getting worse in their communities. This view is prevalent among renters and homeowners across all demographics: political party affiliation, education, race, age and gender.

-Up for Growth

The Data Angle

- Affordable and Available Homes per 100 Households that rent in Delaware.

-NLIHC Gap Report

- * 102 housing units for every 100 households at or below 100% area median income
- * 91 housing units for every 100 households at or below 80% area median income
- * 57 housing units for every 100 households at or below 50% area median income
- * 41 housing units for every 100 households at or below extremely low income

The Morality Angle

- "I believe that everyone has the right to safe, decent, affordable housing."

-World Habitat Day 2012

- "Affordable housing isn't a benefit; it's a right, the foundation of a just society."

-Anonymous

Talking Points: Reforming Land Use and Zoning Practices to Encourage Affordable Housing Development

The Bottom-Line Angle

- “Having enough of the right types of housing would help contain home price appreciation and rental cost increases.

-Up for Growth

- Consuming less land relative to each new unit of housing will lower emissions, enabling communities to improve resiliency to the worsening climate crisis.

- Up for Growth

The Public Opinion Angle

- A small share of those cities that do have homelessness plans mention housing policies. Only 30% mention land use and zoning — the most powerful policy tools that local governments wield in reducing the local cost of housing.

-Policy Brief: Cities, Zoning, and the Fragmented Response to Homelessness by Dr. Charley E. Willison

The Data Angle

- After Zoning Reform, Minneapolis Rent Growth Slowed, [and] Homelessness Dropped.

- Alex Horowitz PEW

The Morality Angle

- By building more housing of all kinds and by making sure people— whether our loved ones or complete strangers— have a safe place to lay their heads at night, we can make sure everyone who is part of our community cannot only live here but thrive.

-Housing Narrative Lab

Talking Points:

Protecting the rights of people experiencing homelessness & implementing data-driven solutions to homelessness.

The 'Bottom Line' Angle

- Arresting and ticketing people who have no resources and nowhere to go only makes the problem worse. It does not solve the problem.
- We should be listening to the boot- on-the-ground experts here in Delaware.

The Data Angle

- Homelessness is increasing across the country & in Delaware as people struggle to make ends meet. The number of Delawareans who are homeless increased 9% from 2023 to 2024, and 16% from 2024-2025.

The Public Opinion Angle

- 72% of Americans agree that arresting and fining people for sleeping outside won't solve homelessness, especially if there's no other shelter.
- 61% of Americans would be more likely to vote for a candidate that opposed a plan to have police arrest people experiencing homelessness who live on the streets.

The Morality Angle

- Arresting or ticketing people who have no resources and nowhere to go is ineffective, cruel, and uncompassionate.
- We get to choose what kind of country, state, and city we want to be. What are we striving towards? Do we want all residents to have somewhere safe to sleep, or do we want to arrest and ticket people in need?

Talking Points:

Enhancing Tenant Rights and Protections

The Bottom-Line Angle

- Financial desperation may push individuals into further traumatizing encounters, exploitive jobs or place them at further risk for sexual harm.

- National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2023
- When access to basic needs such as housing and safety are compromised, individuals can experience heightened risk of violence.

- NLIHC Advocate Guide 2024

The Public Opinion Angle

- Center for Public Democracy, Right to the City Action, and High Impact Teaching Strategies released [survey data](#) earlier this month showing that 87% of U.S. voters believe the "cost of rent and housing is a major or big problem in their state" and that 70% said they are "more likely to vote for someone who supports rent stabilization policies."
- "Tenant protections aren't just good policies—they're good politics," said Esteban Girón, member of the Tenants PAC Board. "Candidates have the opportunity to win big by committing to keep rents affordable and protect tenants from displacement."

The Data Angle

- Half of renters are spending more than 30% of their income on rent (Delaware: 44%)

-Alex Horowitz PEW
- One-quarter of renters are spending more than 50% of their income on rent (Delaware: 22%)

- Alex Horowitz PEW

The Morality Angle

- Solutions to our nation's housing crisis that address housing affordability and supply must be paired with strong and enforceable tenant protections to help prevent housing instability and homelessness, redress long-standing racial and social inequities, and advance housing justice.

- National Low Income Housing Coalition

Talking Points: Increasing Delaware's Supply of Supportive Housing

The Bottom-Line Angle

- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) refers to providing affordable housing along with voluntary supportive services to address homelessness. PSH is considered a Housing First principle, meaning there are no preconditions (e.g., sobriety, enrollment in mental health services, etc.) for program participants to access housing. Housing first approaches to addressing homelessness support the idea that homelessness is most efficiently ended by providing someone with access to safe, decent and affordable housing. PSH is designed to build independent living and tenancy skills, with services that connect people with community-based health care, treatment, and employment services.

-National League of Cities

The Data Angle

- Permanent Supportive Housing can generate gross savings of over \$46,000 per person per year compared to leaving people on the streets.

-Evidence for Housing-Based Encampment Strategies by CDC and HUD

- In Dallas, Texas: "an encampment 'closure via housing' approach is used, meaning their encampments are resolved by placing people into housing. The city's 2024 annual homeless census showed a 24% decrease in unsheltered homelessness and 19% reduction in overall homelessness from the previous year."

-Evidence for Housing-Based Encampment Strategies by CDC and HUD

The Public Opinion Angle

- In focus groups and polling, when asked to identify contributing factors to homelessness, respondents often name economic factors such as inflation and unexpected expenses like job loss or the high cost of rent.

- Housing Narrative Lab

- 71% agree homeless organizations are trying to make a difference but lack the resources they need to make a real impact.

-National Alliance to End Homelessness

The Morality Angle

- No matter our race, gender or income, we all need a safe place to live.

- Housing Narrative Lab

Simple Sample 2 Minute Testimony

1) Introduce Yourself and State Why You Are There and What You Want

- Your name, organization, and your position
- The name of the bill you want them to vote for or against
- One sentence about why you are there or building your credential

EXAMPLE: I'm John Smith, I lived in an encampment for one year. I am here to ask you to please vote for the Deborah Gilbert White Bill. I know what it is like to regularly interact with the police when you're homeless.

2) Use the Middle Section to do only one of the following:

- Tell a short story.
- Identify the problem that exists that this bill will fix.
- Identify problems that passing this bill will cause.
- Tell why this bill or issue is important to you.

EXAMPLE: Arresting or ticketing people who have no resources and nowhere to go is ineffective, cruel, and uncompassionate. I remember countless times when the police told us that we had to move but could not tell us where we could go because all the emergency shelters were full.

3) Repeat your position and your ask

- Reiterate your position on the bill.
- Add a one sentence summary of why this is your position.
- End with a call to action: Please vote for or against this bill.

EXAMPLE: For this reason, I ask you to protect people experiencing homelessness from being arrested or ticketed simply for being homeless with no place to go. Please vote yes to the Deborah Gilbert White Bill.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

To become a Housing Advocate, click here and scroll down

Housing Alliance Delaware (HAD): [Policy & Community Development](#)

To learn more about Housing Alliance Delaware's policy priorities please visit our website
[Home | Housing Alliance Delaware](#)

To learn more about the criminalization of homelessness

National Alliance to End Homelessness: [What Communities Need to Know About the Criminalization of Homelessness](#)

To learn more about effective messaging on homelessness and affordable housing crises

Housing Narrative Lab: [Housing Narrative Lab | Changing the story so everyone has a safe place to call home](#)

For more information on supportive housing

Corporation for Supportive Housing: [Supportive Housing 101](#)

To learn more about tenants' rights

National Low Income Housing Coalition: [Tenant Protections](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
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