

In February we heard from witnesses about the housing challenges that families and their communities face.

We heard that more than two-thirds of families aren't able to afford to buy a typical new home.

We heard about how local exclusionary zoning policies – from minimum lot sizes to parking requirements – combine with process delays are to shut out new construction.

We heard about the rising costs facing renters, especially working class renters, and how few homes are available for them – including in rural areas.

And we heard about the need to repair the homes we already have, by making them safer, more efficient, and more accessible for families, including seniors.

We've been hearing about these challenges for years – and not just from renters and homeowners themselves, but from community leaders and businesses.

Because a shortage of affordable housing isn't just a housing problem. It's an education problem. It's a healthcare problem. It's an economic growth problem.

In Ohio, I've heard from mayors and sheriffs and cops, from Lancaster to Grove City to Lima, that first responders who work in these communities want to live there, and can't. That makes it hard to recruit and retain the kind of young, diverse talent they need to keep their communities working and keep them safe.

In Cleveland, a coalition ranging from hospitals to schools to community groups has banded together on an innovative education and investment campaign to prevent lead poisoning.

And as new jobs come to Central Ohio, everyone from mayors to the CEOs of more than 80 of the largest institutions in the region are talking about the need to invest in affordable housing to attract and support workers.

These challenges are playing out in every state. Our constituents are calling on us to address them.

At today's hearing, we'll start examining proposals to make housing more affordable, safer, and easier to find. And we'll work toward finding common ground on commonsense solutions this Committee can advance.

Many members, on both sides of the aisle, have put forward ideas.

That includes Ranking Member Scott's ROAD to Housing proposal, which I'm sure he will touch on today.

It also includes Senator Coons and Senator Cramer's Choice in Affordable Housing Act, which aims to get more landlords involved in the voucher program.

Senators Van Hollen and Young have authored the Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act, to help support low-income families, including families who want to move to areas with better schools and more job opportunities.

Senator Cortez Masto has also put forward a reauthorization of the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, to help states and communities address our nation's changing housing needs.

There are also a number of members off of this Committee who have developed proposals to address our housing needs.

That includes Senator Casey, who has been working on a proposal to address blighted properties, drive community revitalization, and support affordable housing development by supporting and strengthening local land banks.

I've also been working with Senator Casey and Senator Collins on the Grandfamily Housing Act, which would support the housing needs of grandparents who become the primary caregivers for their grandchildren.

It also includes Senator Bennet, who led our bipartisan Eviction Crisis Act, to help prevent unnecessary evictions and the harm that's caused when children and parents are suddenly uprooted and have no place to call home.

And Senators Schatz and Collins, who authored the Reforming Disaster Recovery Act to help our country better recover from the increasing number of natural disasters facing communities across the country.

In addition to today's hearing, next week Senators Smith and Lummis will hold a hearing on the unique housing challenges facing rural communities, which is another important piece of this discussion.

Work to address our housing shortage isn't just limited to our Committee. The Finance Committee is also discussing important proposals, like the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act and the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, that, along with proposals out of this Committee, could help support more affordable housing development for renters and homeowners.

We may not all agree on every idea, but today's hearing is another important step as we continue our work to build consensus on legislation that can help address the many challenges facing the people and communities that we represent.

I want to thank Ranking Member Scott and all of the members who are here today for being part of this important, bipartisan discussion.