



**Chairman David Price**  
**Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development,**  
**and Related Agencies**  
**Creating Equitable Communities Through Transportation and**  
**Housing**  
**March 25, 2021**

The hearing will come to order. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the first THUD Subcommittee hearing of 2021. Although we are gathering in a virtual format, I trust that we'll have a productive session. Please remember to mute your mics when you are not speaking!

Before I make an opening statement, I want to say how pleased I am that **Mr. Diaz-Balart** and I will continue to be partners on the Subcommittee. Mario, I look forward to working with you and your Republican colleagues to write a FY22 THUD bill that will garner strong bipartisan support.

I also want to introduce the new Subcommittee members on the Democratic side of the dais, and I'll let Mario introduce the new Subcommittee members on the Republican side:

**Rep. Adriano Espaillat** of New York;

**Rep. Jennifer Wexton** of Virginia; and

**Rep. David Trone** of Maryland.

I've had the pleasure of speaking with all of them in recent weeks to learn about their goals and priorities for transportation and housing. They each bring valuable perspectives to the Subcommittee, and I'm excited to have them join myself and our returning members on "Team THUD."

Today's hearing is entitled: "*Creating Equitable Communities Through Transportation and Housing.*" The focus on equity for our first hearing of the year is a very deliberate choice.

Economic inequality in America has been steadily increasing over the last 30 years, with the top 10 percent of Americans now holding roughly 70 percent of country's total wealth. Over the same time period, middle-class incomes have grown at a slower rate than upper-class incomes, resulting in a shrinking middle-class.

Black households continue to fall behind their white counterparts economically because of the cumulative effects of biases and prejudices that have sometimes been embodied in public policies; at other times they have stood in the way of the observance or enforcement of laws aimed at countering discrimination and inequity.

The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor last year ignited a long overdue reckoning in this country about our shared history, our halting progress toward racial equality, and the values we claim to hold in a pluralistic society.

Public demonstrations have often focused on law enforcement or the criminal justice system. But they're also forcing a broader conversation about injustice and inequality in America. This includes and must include a thorough reexamination of housing and transportation policy.

The hard truth is that many of our neighborhoods remain racially and economically segregated more than 50 years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act.

Federal highway construction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century all too often disrupted the health and economic stability of Black neighborhoods resulting in inequities that reverberate today.

When it comes to transportation and housing, those with lower incomes often pay much more than 30 percent of their income for these essential expenses, a far higher percentage than wealthier individuals.

This isn't just an "urban" issue, either. Rural and suburban communities also face acute challenges when it comes to their affordable housing stock and transportation infrastructure, making it difficult for low-income people in these areas to connect to jobs and economic opportunity.

Meanwhile, many of our Native communities lack the basic infrastructure required for safe and sanitary living, including running water. And the list goes on.

Unfortunately, deliberate policy decisions by the Federal government—from redlining to urban renewal—played a key role in creating these disparities.

We may not have been Members of Congress when these decisions were made, but this legacy is an ever-present factor in the lives of tens of millions of Americans—our fellow citizens. Turning a blind eye is not an option.

We are also grappling with a COVID-19 pandemic that has not only exposed but exacerbated the vast inequities in our communities.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that families with children have been hit particularly hard: 4 in 10 children in renter households are experiencing either housing or food hardship.

Black and Latino households, which have experienced disproportionately high job losses during the pandemic, are much more likely than others to report that they are either not caught up on rent or are not getting enough to eat.

The American Rescue Plan Act will help fill this gap. It is providing critical relief to get individuals, families, and communities to the other side of this pandemic.

But the data makes clear that not everyone will recover from the impacts of the pandemic to the same degree, and people of color in particular are likely to experience lasting effects that affect future generations if we do not address the deep and entrenched disparities already present in our society.

The Federal government must continue to advance policy solutions that change this trajectory, and this Subcommittee has an important role to play in this broader effort.

We've already made some small strides on a bipartisan basis in recent years. For example, beyond the full range of investments in community development, housing, and transportation programs, the FY21 enacted THUD bill:

- Prioritized areas of persistent poverty by setting aside more than \$30 million in planning and technical assistance grants for marginalized communities,
- Included funding for internships geared toward minority-serving institutions of higher education,
- Boosted funding for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act,
- Provided billions for homeless prevention and assistance,
- Appropriated new funding to address urgent health and safety threats in Federally assisted housing, and
- Created a new pilot program to provide legal assistance to those facing eviction.

These are promising steps, and we must find ways to build on this progress. To do that, we need to explore some important questions.

What exactly does equity mean and how is it defined? How does the Federal government further or hinder it? What is the role of states and local governments, nonprofits, and the private sector in creating more equitable transportation and housing opportunities? How do we “operationalize” equity in terms of public policy?

Here to help us in this endeavor are four outstanding experts with deep knowledge of our nation's housing and transportation systems and how those systems impact the lives of people, neighborhoods, and communities.

**Dorval R. Carter**, President, Chicago Transit Authority

**Elizabeth Kneebone**, Research Director, Turner Center for Housing Innovation, University of California, Berkeley

**Steve Kirk**, President, Rural Neighborhoods, Incorporated

**Dr. Catherine L. Ross**, Regents' Professor, Schools of City and Regional Planning and Civil and Environmental Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this afternoon, and of course, collaborating with all my Subcommittee colleagues to produce a FY22 THUD bill we can all support.

I'd now like to recognize the Ranking Member, **Mr. Diaz-Balart**, for his opening statement.