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Habitat for Humanity Greater Orlando & Osceola County aims to improve home affordability in Orange and Osceola Counties through new national advocacy campaign

Habitat organizations across the country are mobilizing to influence policy and system changes at the federal, state and local levels

Orlando, FL (June 12, 2019) — Nearly 19 million households across the United States are spending at least half of their income on a place to live, often forgoing basic necessities such as food and health care to make ends meet. The Greater Orlando area is worst in the nation when it comes to finding an affordable place to live, especially for low-income households, according to the Affordable Housing Gap Analysis by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. The stability that housing should bring continues to remain out of reach for many people.

On Wednesday, Habitat Orlando & Osceola joined Habitat organizations across the country to launch a new national advocacy campaign aimed at improving home affordability for 10 million people in the U.S. over the next five years. Marking significant growth in Habitat's commitment to ensuring that everyone has a safe and decent place to call home, the Cost of Home campaign seeks to identify and improve policies and systems through coordinated advocacy efforts at the local, state and federal levels.

Cost of Home focuses on improving housing affordability across the housing continuum in four specific policy areas: increasing supply and preservation of affordable homes, equitably increasing access to credit, optimizing land use for affordable homes, and ensuring access to and development of communities of opportunity.

Habitat Orlando & Osceola has already taken several steps toward these goals. Their advocacy initiatives include:

Statewide:

- Ensuring that existing housing trust funds are actually used for affordable housing. The Florida State Legislature consistently reallocates them for unrelated uses.
- Adopting legislation that prohibits the routine allocation of new state housing trust funds for unrelated purposes.
- Expanding funding of the Community Contribution Tax Credit program. This program encourages corporations that pay Florida Taxes to support affordable housing with a tax credit for their donation.

Locally:

- Encouraging zoning and land use regulation changes that promote the production of affordable housing such as inclusionary zoning and accessory dwelling units.

- Serving on task forces focused on affordable housing including Orange County's Housing for All Task Force, the City of Orlando's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, and the City of Kissimmee's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.
- Fostering changes in the tax structure (impact fees) that discourage the production of affordable housing.
- Supporting local funding being considered for affordable housing.
- Addressing local regulations that impede affordable housing production.

Habitat Orlando & Osceola will work with both local and state officials to dedicate more resources for home repair, modification and weatherization.

"We can't meet the need through building alone," said Catherine Steck McManus, president and CEO of Habitat Orlando & Osceola. "We can't reach our vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live without addressing the underlying policies and systems that hinder access to housing. Solving the nation's home affordability challenge will take all of us working together. Please join us in our efforts to address home affordability."

More details about Habitat's Cost of Home policy platform and campaign activation are available at [habitat.org/costofhome](https://www.habitat.org/costofhome).

About Habitat for Humanity Greater Orlando & Osceola County

Driven by a vision that everyone deserves a decent place to live, Habitat for Humanity Greater Orlando & Osceola County builds affordable housing, revitalizes neighborhoods and strengthens communities. Families and individuals in need of a hand up partner with Habitat Orlando & Osceola to build or improve a place they call home. Habitat homeowners help build their own homes alongside volunteers and pay an affordable mortgage. Working together by providing financial support, volunteering or becoming an advocate, everyone can help advance access to safe, decent and affordable homes. Help us make the [#CostofHome](https://www.habitat.org/costofhome) something we *all* can afford.

Habitat Orlando & Osceola is one of Habitat for Humanity International's affiliates working in nearly 1,400 communities throughout the United States and in more than 70 counties. To learn more, visit [habitatorlandoosceola.org](https://www.habitatorlandoosceola.org), like us on [Facebook/habitatorlandoosceola](https://www.facebook.com/habitatorlandoosceola) and follow us on Twitter [@HabitatOrlOsc](https://twitter.com/HabitatOrlOsc).

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