



UFF-DA!

Useful Facts and Figures— Data for Affiliates

Advocacy – August 2020

“The housing need is far too great to build one house at a time. But that need can be met, if we use our voices and not just our hammers.” —Jonathan Reckford, Habitat for Humanity CEO and president. Habitat for Humanity’s advocacy agenda: Building strength, stability and self-reliance by advocating for increased access to quality, affordable housing across the United States. Advocacy is key to our work!

2020 Habitat on the Hill D.C.

- Affiliates gathered at this annual conference to learn advocacy strategies and share local affordability solutions, then visited members of Congress.

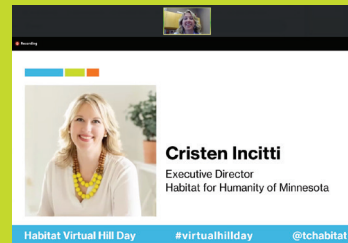
- 375 Habitat supporters gathered to elevate the #CostOfHome campaign in 2020.
- **13 Minnesotans** from Twin Cities Habitat, Habitat MN, Douglas County, Rice County Habitat, and two campus chapters traveled to Washington, D.C. for the



- event.
- The group had 10 meetings with legislators and their staff.

This year’s event was virtual and featured a great slate of speakers, from Lt Gov Flanagan to Housing Commissioner Ho to a homeowner from Douglas County to Habitat Minnesota’s executive director, Cristen Incitti!

2020 Habitat on the Hill MN



Ten Minnesota affiliates, plus Habitat Minnesota, were among the 156 attendees on the virtual event. These included

- Douglas County, Goodhue County, Lakes Area, North St. Louis County, Rice County, South Central MN, Twin Cities, Two Rivers, and West Central Minnesota Habitats.

Cost of Home Turns 1!

On June 12, 2019, hundreds of Habitat organizations across the country launched the first national advocacy campaign: Cost of Home. Through the 5-year campaign, local Habitat organizations, partners, volunteers, and community members will work together to find solutions and help create the policies that will allow **10 million individuals to afford the cost of home.**

In Minnesota,



1 IN 9 HOUSEHOLDS

spend half or more of their income on housing.

Habitat made great progress in year one; **more than 300 Habitat organizations from 45 states and Washington, D.C.,** came together to advance policies to help families afford the cost of home. By evaluating reported policy wins, it’s estimated that the campaign has helped **improve access to home affordability for nearly 1.5 million people!**

Our world today is very different from when Cost of Home launched. The significant health and economic impacts of COVID-19, which disproportionately impacted communities of color, paired with the murders of George Floyd and others highlighted the systemic racism in our society. There is much work to do to decrease racial disparities, and Habitat Minnesota is paying close attention the conversation around homeownership. Before the pandemic, more than 18 million families in the U.S. were spending half or more of their income on housing. Now, with millions filing for unemployment, the situation is likely much worse. Families are facing additional economic hardship from lost wages or layoffs and are increasingly confronted with choosing between shelter and life’s other essentials.

What Does Advocacy Look Like?

Habitat Minnesota wrote support letters for peer organizations leading on legislative asks, including a \$10M request for Local Housing Trust Fund resources and a policy change to Minnesota Reverse Mortgage law. We have tracked COVID-19 legislative response and worked for additional requests centered on family stability. We're taking note of debates about local fees, permits, and regulations that support City work but can be considered a barrier to new development. Our goal is to build a bridge in this partisan conversation.

Twin Cities Habitat, in addition to supporting Habitat on the Hill, Homes for All MN, and Cost of Home, is dedicating time and resources to Elections Engagement this year, with an [elections blog series](#) and voter and candidate engagement. They are also partnering with Habitat Minnesota to support a candidate questionnaire project led by Minnesota Housing Partnership and other advocacy partners. Advocates will ask all State House and Senate candidates a series of questions about housing and then share the responses.

Other affiliates have had success in similar methods, as well as including advocacy in their newsletters, inviting legislators to their builds and home dedications, serving on housing-related task forces, and working with local leaders to find unique ways to partner, such as getting land donated.



Habitat Minnesota Executive Director Cristen Incitti testifies in support of affordable homeownership

Session Recap

Each year, Homes for All MN, the coalition working to support the continuum of affordable housing, creates a legislative agenda. As part of the coalition, Habitat Minnesota joined other affiliates and housing organizations across the state in asking for funding for two main priorities: Funding for **housing assistance dollars through the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP)** and investing in infrastructure projects across the continuum of housing through a **bonding bill**.

Key information from this year's session:

- The 2020 legislative session was significantly affected by COVID as much of session meetings and voting had to be done remotely. Focus was also on COVID-19 relief.
- Session ended on May 18. During session's final weekend, the House proposed a bonding bill that included \$200 million in Housing Infrastructure Bonds (HIBs) as well as \$48 million in General Obligation (GO) bonds for public housing. The bill did not pass. In the Senate, they proposed a bonding bill with only \$2 million in GO bonds for public housing. This bill also failed to gain the required votes and did not pass. The Senate then took up a separate bill that packaged \$100 million for FHPAP, \$100 million in HIBs, and a series of regulatory policies related to residential construction. This bill passed with a majority of votes but was not taken up by the House before the legislature adjourned.
- Lawmakers returned for special sessions in June and July, but **still failed to pass bonds or FHPAP funding**.
- A success in 2020 was the Governor's decision to **allocate \$100 million in federal coronavirus aid to housing assistance** to help prevent evictions, prevent homelessness, and maintain housing stability for individuals and families impacted by COVID-19. Habitat will be helping to disburse some of this funding. Additional information can be found at mnhousing.gov.

More Ways to Get Involved

- [Sign up](#) for Action Alerts from Twin Cities Habitat to receive notifications about upcoming advocacy events and ways to engage your legislators at the federal, state, and local levels!
- Check out Twin Cities Habitat's [Virtual Advocacy Resource Center](#) for tools including meeting outlines, talking points, and guides for virtual lobbying and telling your story.
- [Subscribe](#) to Habitat Minnesota's bi-monthly LENA newsletter and receive advocacy updates and ways to get involved each month!
- [Enroll in](#) the Cost of Home campaign to increase Habitat's impact, access resources, raise your organization's profile, and increase community engagement.
- Follow [@CostOfHome](#) on Twitter for updates.