



# Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH

Feb. 12, 2025

To the 89th Texas Legislature:

Catholics believe that housing is a human right. As such, governments, the private sector, nonprofit organizations, and churches and their ministries have a shared responsibility to ensure all people have access to affordable and stable housing.

The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops support the “Yes in God's Backyard (YIGBY)” movement, because it would help faith-based and nonprofit organizations improve their capacity to meet the housing needs of poor and vulnerable community members. We urge its passage.

The United States is in a profound and prolonged housing crisis. When there is a systemic lack of housing affordability, housing costs for low-income households also rise, exacerbating their financial insecurity. The problems are even more acute for African American, Latino, and Indigenous households, who are at least twice as likely to experience housing cost burdens as white households.

The Catholic Church’s ministries, in the form of local Catholic Charities agencies, related Catholic non-profit affordable housing providers and other organizations, constitute one of the largest private providers of housing to poor and vulnerable people across the country. However, more must be done to respond to the immense suffering faced by poor households, and Catholics can do more. In *The Right to a Decent Home*, the Catholic bishops of the United States challenge Catholic institutions to “take an inventory of our property and real estate, reflect upon its utilization, and examine how it might better be put at the service of those who lack adequate shelter. . . [as well as] make better use of our economic and personnel resources to assist those who need housing” (No. 89). YIGBY legislation would make it easier for the Church to do precisely this, empowering faith-based and other nonprofit institutions to use their resources responsibly to serve more vulnerable families.

The Catholic bishops believe decent, safe, and affordable housing is a human right. Catholic teaching affirms the right of individuals to own private property. To serve the common good, communities and the government have an obligation to ensure everyone's need for safe and affordable housing is met, especially those who are poor and vulnerable. In a time of rising homelessness and when many workers' wages are stagnant and living expenses are rising, it is important to ensure housing security.

Thank you for all you do to serve and empower poor and vulnerable families. We look forward to working with you on this and other policies that advance the common good.

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The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops (TCCB) is the official public policy voice of the 16 Roman Catholic bishops of Texas.

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# YES, IN GOD'S BACKYARD: AN APPROACH TO HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Today, more than half of renters in Texas are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities.

Meanwhile, homeownership is slipping further out of reach for middle-income families, with homebuyers needing to earn 80% more than they did just a few years ago to afford a home.

The impact of this crisis is profound. Families are being forced to live in unsafe or overcrowded conditions or to move further away from their workplaces, schools, and places of worship, eroding the sense of community that is essential to human flourishing.

We believe there are practical steps that can be taken to address this crisis, and we offer these recommendations for your consideration.



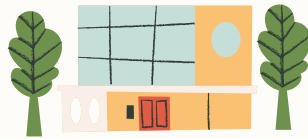
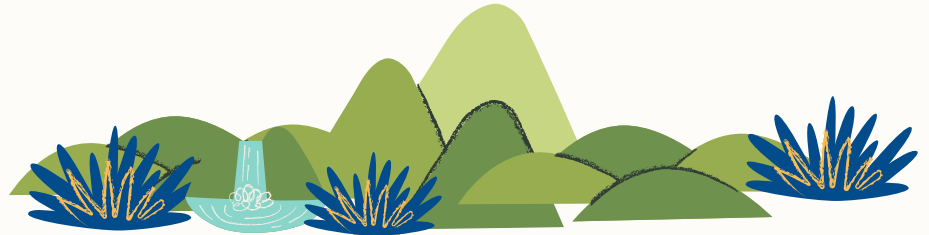
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## **SB 840/HB 3404: EXPAND RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS IN COMMERCIAL ZONES**

Allowing housing to be built in areas zoned for commercial use or office space can create much-needed housing options, especially in areas with high demand.



## **SB 15: IN NEW NEIGHBORHOODS, REDUCE MINIMUM LOT SIZE REQUIREMENTS**

Many cities in Texas require homes to be built on large lots of 7,500 square feet, one acre or more. Research shows that reducing these requirements increases homeownership opportunities, lowers housing costs, and can reduce homelessness.



## **SB 854/HB 3172: YES IN GOD'S BACKYARD**

Opening property owned by church and faith-based organizations to build housing will help the many faith-based school teachers and clergy who struggle to continue their work, generate a steady income flow to faith-based organizations and provide a critical need to the community.



## **SB 844/HB 24: REVISIT THE PROTEST PETITION STATE LAW**

Current law allows a small minority of property owners to halt numerous "Missing Middle" housing units, including charitable initiatives such as Habitat for Humanity homes. Removing this barrier would give thousands of Texans access to affordable homes.