The Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act of 2019

The United States faces a critical shortage of affordable rental housing, with harmful effects on millions of families.

- Not a single U.S. county has enough affordable rental housing to meet demand and 3 in 4 families eligible for federal rental assistance don’t receive it due to funding limitations.
- 6 million families with children lack stable housing, are at risk of losing their homes, or live in unsafe or overcrowded conditions.

Housing vouchers have played a key role in reducing homelessness, but there are not enough vouchers to meet demand.

- A Johns Hopkins University study found that children from voucher households saw lower hospitalization rates compared with children from non-voucher households.

Housing instability has been shown to lead to learning, behavioral, and mental health problems in children.

- The stress of not having stable housing affects children’s brain development, leading to learning, behavioral, and mental health problems.
- For school-age children, lack of stable housing undermines learning, including for other children in “high-turnover” classrooms.
- Research has found that families who have difficulty paying rent or utility bills were more likely to delay medical treatment and use the emergency room for treatment.

Housing vouchers that allow families to move to areas of higher opportunities increase outcomes for children.

- Neighborhoods determine what schools children attend, how much violence they are exposed to, and what environmental toxins they are exposed to.
- Research shows that every year that low-income children spend in neighborhoods with quality schools and other advantages improves their chances of succeeding in school and later as adults.
- Children who used vouchers to live in areas with lower concentrations of poverty are much likelier to attend college and much less likely to become single parents; they also earn more as adults.

The Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act of 2019 would help families who are facing unstable living circumstances by:

- Creating an additional 500,000 housing vouchers over five years for low-income, high-need families with young children. Pregnant women and families with a child under age 6 would qualify for these new vouchers if they have a history of homelessness or housing instability, live in an area of concentrated poverty, or are at risk of being pushed out of an opportunity area.
- Providing families receiving the new vouchers with access to counseling and case management services that have a proven track record of helping families move out of poverty.
- Enabling housing agencies to engage new landlords in the voucher program and connect families with information about housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods, and community-based supports for families as they move.