

● Our Policy Lens on Disaster Recovery and Climate Resilience



LSC

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The passage of the [Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#) in August 2022 represents a historic investment by Congress to address the ongoing impacts of climate change. These resources are necessary to meet the Biden Administration's [goal of cutting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions](#) in half by 2030. The new law also provides a tremendous opportunity for underserved communities to further environmental equity and climate justice.

The increasing frequency of environmental hazards and natural disasters caused by climate change has a disproportionate impact on the health, income, and housing stability of underserved populations and communities. For instance, [roughly 25 percent of natural-hazard mortality is due to heat exposure](#), and throughout the U.S., neighborhoods that include a greater proportion of low-income people and people of color [experience significantly higher extreme surface heat](#). Poor air quality is another prevalent public health challenge. In nearly all regions of the country, children in lower-income households are most likely to live in areas with the highest projected increases in childhood asthma diagnoses due to climate-driven changes. Lack of affordable health insurance exacerbates these problems, as [60 percent](#) of the uninsured are people of color and [58 percent](#) are below 200 percent of the poverty level.

Despite facing disproportionately high climate-related risk, people of color and those on low incomes are [less likely to have the financial resources](#) to protect against

and recover from climate-related loss, leaving them particularly susceptible. In addition, these employees experience more challenges resulting from reduced pay from lost labor hours caused by the impacts of climate change. On average, census tracts subject to higher climate impacts are [projected](#) to experience increases of up to 49 lost labor hours per worker with 2°C of global warming, and up to 84 lost labor hours per worker with 4°C of global warming for individuals who work outdoors, or indoors without air conditioning.

Climate impacts will also have a disproportionate impact on tenants in our nation's affordable housing properties, many of which are [located in coastal zones at risk of floods](#) due to discriminatory land use decisions.

We cannot fulfill our nation's climate goals without strong alignment with federal policies and programs that support investments in all facets of our work. LISC has released a comprehensive set of climate-resilience policy priorities and proposals that we intend to promote with members of Congress and the Administration in the coming months and years. We highlight below a subset of the proposals that we believe can be particularly powerful in combatting climate change impacts on underserved people and communities.

Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Underserved communities face disproportionate harm from the effects of climate change, yet typically have less capacity to implement resiliency measures or equitably recover when disasters strike. LISC has identified the following capacity-building and technical-assistance policy proposals as particularly meaningful given their abilities to address climate change:

- **Increasing technical assistance resources at HUD and other federal agencies.** Disaster recovery and climate mitigation projects are complicated, with a more limited set of organizations available to implement them in smaller and underserved communities. LISC supports increased resources for technical assistance programs at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal agencies, with a focus on rural and economically distressed communities. These critical programs help communities implement disaster recovery efforts and climate mitigation work.
- **Augmenting capacity building resources.** Non-profit affordable housing organizations are embedded in local communities and provide essential housing and services for underserved people. These organizations assist residents before and after disasters and need additional capacity building resources to scale their work and ensure equitable recoveries.
- **Passage of the [America's Call to Improve Opportunities Now \(ACTION\) for National Service Act.](#)** This legislation would, among other things, establish a Civilian Climate Corps to increase the capacity of local communities to fight and adapt to climate change.

Economic Development

Federal economic development programs are essential resources for climate mitigation projects and to support recovery efforts. LISC has identified the following economic development policy proposals as important for addressing climate change:

- **Permanently authorize disaster relief through the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program and annually appropriate a modest amount to a Declared Disaster Recovery Fund to allow for immediate assistance.** LISC joins the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) in calling for passage of the [Reforming Disaster Recovery Act](#) to make CDBG-DR permanent and implement much-needed reforms that expedite assistance and ensure the resources are targeted to those most in need.
- **Expand [equitable transit-oriented development](#)** to lower greenhouse gas emissions and to counteract longstanding transportation policies that have directly and indirectly led to pervasive patterns of neighborhood segregation and economic isolation.
- **Ensure [federal infrastructure investments are implemented equitably](#)** so people of all income levels can benefit from projects that reduce carbon emissions and make communities more resilient.
- **Remediate public health risks in environmental justice communities** by implementing the [Environmental and Climate Justice program, a new initiative of the](#) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- **Scale the climate financing and technical assistance activities of community development financial institutions (CDFIs)** by implementing the

EPA's [Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund program](#), and allow CDFIs to access these resources for projects that lower greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Authorize the [CDFI Crisis Fund Act](#)**, so there's an ongoing source of disaster recovery and resilience funding for CDFIs.

Family Income and Wealth Building

The Inflation Reduction Act, along with other public and private investments, is spurring increased demand for green products and services. It's essential that underserved people access green workforce development training so they can compete for these higher-wage positions. LISC has identified the following proposals as important for ensuring low-income people are able to be a part of our nation's increasingly green economy:

- **Ensure the Inflation Reduction Act's green workforce development training and apprenticeship programs reach underserved populations.** LISC supports the Administration's goal of promoting more equitable access to existing workforce development training programs that target lower-income working people, to ensure broad access to living-wage twenty-first-century jobs.
- **Scale programs to diversify the green workforce.** Participation in the growing green economy has largely benefited white and male individuals, with [stagnant participation](#) rates for women and people of color. To diversify the workforce and ensure inclusive economic mobility opportunities, LISC urges Congress to increase funding for Registered Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs focused on green jobs.

Housing

The building sector is a contributor to climate change, accounting for [13 percent of our nation's annual greenhouse gas emissions](#). LISC has identified key housing policy proposals that we believe will help improve affordable housing performance, while also making homes healthier for low-income tenants:

- **Implement the Green and Resilient Retrofit Program.** The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provided \$1 billion for the [Green and Resilient Retrofit Program \(GRRP\)](#), which will provide grant and loan funding for retrofits and resilience measures at properties participating in HUD's multifamily project-based rental assistance housing portfolio. LISC supports equitable implementation of GRRP and utilizing data from properties participating in the program to advocate for additional retrofit and resilience funding.
- **Equitably implement the Home Efficiency and Electrification Rebate programs.** The IRA provided \$9 billion for single-family and multifamily housing rebate programs, which support energy efficiency retrofits and electrification. LISC supports equitable implementation of these rebates and recommends that the U.S. Department of Energy incorporate program design features that allow the funding to be utilized by underserved people and disadvantaged communities.