

Opening Doors

A HOUSING PUBLICATION FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

OCTOBER 2005 • ISSUE 27



A PUBLICATION OF THE
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
COLLABORATIVE, INC. (TAC)
AND THE CONSORTIUM FOR
CITIZENS WITH DISABILITIES
(CCD) HOUSING TASK FORCE

***Priced Out in 2004:* The Escalating Housing Crisis Affecting People with Disabilities**

By Ann O'Hara, Emily Cooper, and Jonathan Buttrick

Introduction

In 2004, the national average rent for a modest one-bedroom housing unit climbed to a record high of \$676 – more than the entire monthly income of people with disabilities who rely on the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program to pay for housing and other basic needs. Between 2002 and 2004, the cost of rental housing rose from 105.5 percent to 109.6 percent of monthly SSI payments – pricing people with disabilities completely out of the rental housing market.

These are two of the important findings included in *Priced Out in 2004* – a new study of the extreme housing affordability problems of people with disabilities with the lowest incomes. *Priced Out in 2004* is being published by the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. (TAC) and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Housing Task Force to focus public attention on the serious housing crisis that affects the lowest-income adults with disabilities – those who qualify for federal SSI payments.

SSI is the federal income maintenance program that provides a base of support for people with significant and long-term disabilities who have virtually no assets. Some states provide an additional SSI supplement for people with specific types of disabilities and/or people with disabilities residing in specific housing arrangements such as congregate living or structured residential settings.

Since *Priced Out in 1998* was published six years ago, the housing affordability gap be-

tween SSI income and modest rents has grown at an astonishing rate. In 1998, it was impossible to imagine that rents for one-bedroom and studio units would increase 59 percent in a mere six years to a level higher than the entire monthly income of a person receiving SSI.

This issue of *Opening Doors* focuses on the key findings published in *Priced Out in 2004*, a biennial comparison of the amount of monthly SSI income received by people with disabilities living independently with modest rental housing costs represented by the Fair Market Rents (FMRs) published annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). *Priced Out in 2004* is also a call for an immediate, significant, and long overdue government response to this housing crisis.

Priced Out in 2004 may be downloaded in its entirety at www.tacinc.org. A complimentary copy may be ordered from TAC using the order form on page 11, or by emailing a request to publications@tacinc.org.

Major Findings in *Priced Out in 2004*

The major findings from the *Priced Out in 2004* study include the following:

- In 2004, as a national average, a person receiving SSI needed to pay 109.6 percent

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Opening Doors

A Housing Publication for the Disability Community

OPENING DOORS is published as a joint effort by the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc., Boston, MA and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force, Washington, DC.

The Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc.

is a non-profit organization that provides state-of-the-art technical assistance and training to housing and human service organizations so that they may achieve positive outcomes in their work on behalf of people who are disadvantaged and/or disabled. For more information, please contact the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc., 535 Boylston Street, Suite 1301, Boston, Massachusetts 02116. Phone/TTY: (617) 266-5657 or Fax: (617) 266-4343 or email: info@tacinc.org.



The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD)

is a national coalition of consumer, advocacy, provider, and professional organizations who advocate on behalf of people of all ages with disabilities in their families. CCD has created the CCD Housing Task Force to focus specifically on housing issues that affect people with disabilities.



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The CCD Housing Task Force and the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. would like to thank the Melville Charitable Trust for the generous support provided for the preparation and publication of *Opening Doors*, and for their continued commitment in addressing the housing needs of people with disabilities and people who are homeless.

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of their entire monthly income in order to rent a modest one-bedroom unit. From 2002 to 2004, the housing affordability gap for people with disabilities continued to grow alarmingly while federal housing officials repeatedly proposed re-directing essential rent subsidy funds to higher-income households.

- During the six years since *Priced Out in 1998* was published the amount of monthly SSI income needed to rent a modest one-bedroom unit has risen an astonishing 59 percent – from 69 percent of SSI in 1998 to 109.6 percent of SSI in 2004.
- People with disabilities receiving SSI are also priced out of smaller studio/efficiency rental units. In 2004, the national average cost of these units rose to 96.1 percent of monthly SSI, an increase of 8 percent from 2002.
- People with disabilities who rely on SSI payments continue to be among the lowest-income citizens in the United States. In 2004, the national average income of a person with a disability receiving SSI fell to a new low of 18.4 percent of median income – down from 18.8 percent in 2002.
- Over the past six years, since the publication of *Priced Out in 1998*, the national average income of a one-person household receiving SSI disability payments dropped 25 percent relative to median income – from 24.4 percent of median income in 1998 to 18.4 percent in 2004.

Percent of SSI Benefits Needed to Rent a One-Bedroom Housing Unit

A state-by-state analysis of SSI benefits compared to one-bedroom housing costs provides compelling evidence that extreme housing affordability problems for people with disabilities exist in all 50 states even when an SSI supplement is provided. **Table 1** indicates that in 2004, the average rent for a one-bedroom unit was more than SSI income in 20 states and the District of Columbia – four more states than in 2002. The District of Columbia has the dubious honor of having the highest cost rental housing market for people receiving SSI with one-bedroom rents equal to 185 percent of monthly SSI payments. Even in the most affordable state – West Virginia – people receiving SSI had to spend 71 per-

Table I
Percent of SSI Needed to Rent a One-Bedroom Housing Unit

States above 100% are listed in bold

State	% of SSI	State	% of SSI	State	% of SSI
Alabama	78.2%	Kentucky	75.5%	North Dakota	71.5%
Alaska	76.1%	Louisiana	86.0%	Ohio	87.8%
Arizona	111.7%	Maine	93.2%	Oklahoma	71.5%
Arkansas	74.8%	Maryland	145.2%	Oregon	99.2%
California	114.4%	Massachusetts	134.9%	Pennsylvania	98.4%
Colorado	109.0%	Michigan	101.6%	Rhode Island	117.5%
Connecticut	102.5%	Minnesota	99.1%	South Carolina	89.9%
Delaware	114.4%	Mississippi	76.8%	South Dakota	71.3%
District of Columbia	185.3%	Missouri	89.2%	Tennessee	84.9%
Florida	119.5%	Montana	76.2%	Texas	102.7%
Georgia	107.8%	Nebraska	80.0%	Utah	98.4%
Hawaii	156.2%	Nevada	131.2%	Vermont	92.2%
Idaho	77.4%	New Hampshire	119.0%	Virginia	128.4%
Illinois	123.4%	New Jersey	151.4%	Washington	103.9%
Indiana	88.7%	New Mexico	87.2%	West Virginia	71.1%
Iowa	78.5%	New York	137.6%	Wisconsin	80.4%
Kansas	83.9%	North Carolina	97.0%	Wyoming	75.1%
				NATIONAL	109.6%

cent of their monthly income to rent a modest one-bedroom unit.

In 2004, rents for studio/efficiency units in every state were also well above what was affordable to people receiving SSI. **Table 2** on page 4 shows that a total of 13 states had average rents for studio/efficiency units that exceeded 100 percent of monthly SSI income, led again by the District of Columbia. In 22 states, average rents for studio/efficiency units were between 75 and 100 percent of SSI. Even in the least expensive state – North Dakota – a person with a disability would have needed to spend 61 percent of monthly SSI income to rent a modest studio/efficiency apartment.

Disturbing Trends in State Rent Levels

As the result of the nation's housing boom, there have been dramatic increases in rents in certain states. Rhode Island had the greatest relative increase in rental housing costs from 2002 to 2004 with an astounding 28 percent increase in the HUD one-bedroom Fair Market Rent in just two years. In addition to Rhode Island, 12 other states experienced double digit increases in rents between 2002 – 2004 (see **Figure A** below).

An additional 26 states had Fair Market Rent increases between 5-10 percent during this two-

Figure A
States with One-Bedroom Fair Market Rent Increases of 10% or More (2002 - 2004)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Rhode Island - 28.5% | 8. Mississippi - 12.2% |
| 2. Hawaii - 19.7% | 9. Maryland - 11.7% |
| 3. Idaho - 16.9% | 10. Missouri - 11.3% |
| 4. Florida - 13.7% | 11. Nevada - 11.3% |
| 5. Virginia - 13.7% | 12. Nebraska - 10.8% |
| 6. Arkansas - 12.8% | 13. New Jersey - 10.1% |
| 7. Louisiana - 12.5% | |

Table 2

Percent of SSI Needed to Rent an Efficiency Housing Unit

States above 100% are listed in bold

State	% of SSI	State	% of SSI	State	% of SSI
Alabama	70.0%	Kentucky	66.3%	North Dakota	61.7%
Alaska	65.1%	Louisiana	78.4%	Ohio	76.4%
Arizona	95.9%	Maine	80.0%	Oklahoma	65.3%
Arkansas	67.4%	Maryland	126.8%	Oregon	85.0%
California	97.7%	Massachusetts	124.0%	Pennsylvania	86.2%
Colorado	95.7%	Michigan	92.0%	Rhode Island	107.5%
Connecticut	84.6%	Minnesota	85.1%	South Carolina	81.4%
Delaware	106.9%	Mississippi	68.6%	South Dakota	64.2%
District of Columbia	162.2%	Missouri	79.1%	Tennessee	76.4%
Florida	106.6%	Montana	66.0%	Texas	92.6%
Georgia	99.3%	Nebraska	71.9%	Utah	88.8%
Hawaii	134.0%	Nevada	112.4%	Vermont	80.4%
Idaho	68.7%	New Hampshire	100.7%	Virginia	116.3%
Illinois	106.7%	New Jersey	135.4%	Washington	91.0%
Indiana	78.0%	New Mexico	75.9%	West Virginia	63.1%
Iowa	68.6%	New York	118.3%	Wisconsin	68.4%
Kansas	74.3%	North Carolina	86.2%	Wyoming	68.3%
				NATIONAL	96.1%

year period, indicating significant growth in the cost of rental housing in most housing market areas of the country and not simply on the West and East Coasts. For example, states such as Alabama and Kansas – not known for their high-cost housing markets – had increases of 9 percent and 8 percent respectively.

Even in the two states that saw a slight decline in Fair Market Rents (Georgia and South Dakota), one of these states (Georgia) still had one-bedroom rents above 100 percent of SSI. Unfortunately, even when rents go down, people with disabilities receiving SSI payments still cannot afford to pay them.

Highest-Cost Local Housing Market Areas

In 2004, when analyzed by state, there were a total of 170 local housing market areas in the country where the cost of a one-bedroom unit was higher than monthly SSI payments. In

contrast, *Priced Out in 2002* identified 132 local housing market areas with rents exceeding SSI.

In addition to the District of Columbia, 38 states had at least one local housing market area where monthly rents were more than the monthly income of a person with a disability receiving SSI. Significant portions of Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia have now joined the ranks of states like California, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York that have long been recognized as high-cost housing markets. **Figure B** highlights the ten highest-cost local housing market areas in the country for people with disabilities who rely on SSI payments.

Rising Costs in Rural Housing Markets

The rising cost of rental housing is now affecting even the most rural parts of the country and the people with disabilities who live there.

Figure B

Highest-Cost Local Housing Market Areas for One-Bedroom Housing Units, Expressed as a Percent of SSI

1. Columbia (Maryland) - 189.9%
2. Washington (District of Columbia/Maryland/Virginia) - 185.3%
3. Southern New Hampshire - 182.2%
4. Maui County (Hawaii) - 175.2%
5. Middlesex/Somerset/Hunterdon (New Jersey) - 172.9%
6. Nantucket County (Massachusetts) - 169.7%
7. New York (New York) - 166.4%
8. Bergen/Passaic (New Jersey) - 166.3%
9. Pitkin County (Colorado) - 160.4%
10. Nassau/Suffolk (New York) - 159.3%

In 16 states – led by Tennessee – the gap between SSI income and rents in rural areas grew by more than 10 percent between 2002 and 2004 (see **Figure C**). An additional 18 states had increases between 5-10 percent – an upward trend in rural housing costs that was not found in the *Priced Out in 1998, 2000, or 2002* studies. This rural data is one more indication that the affordable housing problems of people with disabilities living on SSI income are not solely concentrated in the more expensive housing markets of the country but exist in every housing market.

SSI Compared to Median Income

People with disabilities who qualify for SSI payments are at the very lowest end of the income scale. A comparison of SSI benefits to one-person household median incomes clearly illustrates the extreme poverty level of people with disabilities receiving SSI benefits and why an ongoing housing subsidy is essential for them to access and maintain housing in the community.

In 2004, the national average income of a person with a disability receiving SSI benefits fell to a new national low of 18.4 percent of median income – down from 18.8 percent of median income in 2002. Over the past six years, since the publication of *Priced Out in 1998*, the national average income of a one-person household receiving SSI disability payments has dropped 25 percent relative to median income – from 24.4 percent of median income in 1998 to 18.4 percent in 2004. **Table 3** on page 6 provides national and state-by-state data comparing SSI income to the average state one-person median income.

Effect of SSI Supplements

The SSI/median income comparison data also reinforces an important policy principle highlighted in previous *Priced Out* studies – that state SSI supplements do increase income but not sufficiently to close the housing affordability gap for people with disabilities. In 2004, state SSI supplements ranged from a high of \$362 per month in Alaska to a low of \$1.70 in Oregon.

Figure C

States with Rural Areas where Growth in Gap Between SSI Income and Rents Exceeded 10% (2002 - 2004)

1. Tennessee - 17.7%
2. Idaho - 15.6%
3. Illinois - 15.3%
4. Missouri - 15.3%
5. Wisconsin - 15.2%
6. Indiana - 14.8%
7. Arkansas - 14.7%
8. Mississippi - 14.5%
9. Nebraska - 14.0%
10. Arizona - 12.3%
11. North Dakota - 12.0%
12. Michigan - 11.9%
13. Colorado - 11.4%
14. Ohio - 10.3%
15. Kentucky - 10.2%
16. Texas - 10.0%

Table 3

SSI Benefits as a Percentage of One-Person Median Income

State	Percent of Median Income	State	Percent of Median Income	State	Percent of Median Income
Alabama	20.3%	Kentucky	20.1%	North Dakota	18.3%
Alaska	21.9%	Louisiana	20.7%	Ohio	17.0%
Arizona	18.1%	Maine	19.3%	Oklahoma	22.2%
Arkansas	21.3%	Maryland	13.4%	Oregon	16.5%
California	21.7%	Massachusetts	15.8%	Pennsylvania	17.7%
Colorado	16.2%	Michigan	16.3%	Rhode Island	17.7%
Connecticut	16.8%	Minnesota	16.8%	South Carolina	18.5%
Delaware	15.4%	Mississippi	23.8%	South Dakota	20.1%
District of Columbia	11.3%	Missouri	17.2%	Tennessee	19.5%
Florida	18.6%	Montana	20.4%	Texas	18.2%
Georgia	16.9%	Nebraska	17.5%	Utah	16.9%
Hawaii	15.4%	Nevada	16.8%	Vermont	18.0%
Idaho	21.6%	New Hampshire	14.9%	Virginia	15.4%
Illinois	15.4%	New Jersey	13.1%	Washington	16.2%
Indiana	16.9%	New Mexico	20.9%	West Virginia	21.8%
Iowa	17.3%	New York	18.7%	Wisconsin	18.7%
Kansas	17.3%	North Carolina	18.2%	Wyoming	18.1%
				NATIONAL	18.4%

Figure D provides a listing of the states which provide SSI supplements to all people with disabilities living independently.

Even in those states with relatively high SSI supplements, people with disabilities are still completely priced out of the rental housing market. Of the 23 states with SSI supplements 11 have one-bedroom average rents that are more than 100 percent of monthly SSI.

SSI Cost-of-Living Increases Compared to Increases in Rents

From 2002 to 2004, the increase in rental housing costs was substantially greater than the cost-of-living increases provided to people receiving SSI payments. Table 4 indicates that, nationally, rents increased by 7.6 percent between 2002 and 2004, while cost-of-living adjustments increased monthly SSI payments by only 3.6

Figure D

2004 State SSI Supplements for People with Disabilities Living Independently in the Community

Alaska - \$362.00	Michigan - \$14.00	Pennsylvania - \$27.40
California - \$226.00	Minnesota - \$81.00	Rhode Island - \$57.35
Colorado - \$37.00	Nebraska - \$12.00	South Dakota - \$15.00
Connecticut - \$183.00	New Hampshire - \$27.00	Vermont - \$52.04
Delaware - \$5.00	New Jersey - \$31.25	Washington* - \$5.45/\$25.90
Idaho - \$52.00	New York - \$87.00	Wisconsin - \$83.78
Maine - \$10.00	Oklahoma - \$50.00	Wyoming - \$9.90
Massachusetts - \$114.39	Oregon - \$1.70	

*In 2004, the State of Washington provided a state supplement of \$25.90 in King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, and Thurston Counties and a supplement of \$5.45 in the remaining counties.

percent over that two-year period. The disparity between growth in income and growth in rents – which has widened significantly in the past six years – is the reason why people with disabilities receiving SSI benefits are completely priced out of the housing market.

This state level data comparison of SSI cost-of-living increases to increases in rents also shows that the housing problems of people with disabilities grew much worse in certain states in just a two-year period of time. In the State of Hawaii – which eliminated its SSI supplement in 2003 and has one of the most expensive housing markets in the country – rental housing costs increased by 19 percent between 2002 and 2004 compared to

a mere 2 percent SSI cost-of-living increase.

SSI Compared to the NLIHC's Housing Wage

The concept of the Housing Wage was developed by the late Cushing Dolbeare, founder of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), and is the amount of income per hour that full-time workers must earn to have their rental housing costs be affordable. Consistent with the approach in *Priced Out*, affordability in the context of the Housing Wage is defined as paying no more than 30 percent of income for

Table 4
Increases in SSI Compared to Increases in Housing Costs (2002 - 2004)

State	% Change in SSI Monthly Payment 2002-2004	% Change in 1-Bedroom FMR 2002 - 2004	State	% Change in SSI Monthly Payment 2002-2004	% Change in 1-Bedroom FMR 2002 - 2004
Alabama	3.5%	9.2%	Montana	3.5%	7.5%
Alaska	2.1%	6.8%	Nebraska	4.2%	10.8%
Arizona	3.5%	6.4%	Nevada	3.5%	11.3%
Arkansas	3.5%	12.8%	New Hampshire	3.3%	8.3%
California	5.3%	6.4%	New Jersey	3.3%	10.1%
Colorado	3.3%	3.1%	New Mexico	3.5%	6.5%
Connecticut	0.0%	4.8%	New York	3.0%	9.7%
Delaware	3.5%	6.5%	North Carolina	3.5%	7.3%
District of Columbia	3.5%	6.2%	North Dakota	3.5%	0.5%
Florida	3.5%	13.7%	Ohio	3.5%	2.5%
Georgia	3.5%	-0.5%	Oklahoma	2.7%	9.2%
Hawaii	2.6%	19.7%	Oregon	3.5%	2.9%
Idaho	3.2%	16.9%	Pennsylvania	3.3%	6.2%
Illinois	3.5%	4.5%	Rhode Island	2.0%	28.5%
Indiana	3.5%	9.9%	South Carolina	3.5%	8.1%
Iowa	3.5%	7.3%	South Dakota	3.4%	-3.7%
Kansas	3.5%	8.5%	Tennessee	3.5%	8.9%
Kentucky	3.5%	6.5%	Texas	3.5%	8.0%
Louisiana	3.5%	12.5%	Utah	3.5%	2.6%
Maine	3.4%	7.0%	Vermont	2.0%	3.3%
Maryland	3.5%	11.7%	Virginia	3.5%	13.7%
Massachusetts	2.9%	3.0%	Washington	3.4%	0.0%
Michigan	3.4%	7.3%	West Virginia	3.5%	6.1%
Minnesota	3.0%	6.9%	Wisconsin	3.0%	9.9%
Mississippi	3.5%	12.2%	Wyoming	3.4%	5.6%
Missouri	3.5%	11.3%	NATIONAL	3.6%	7.6%

Table 5
Hourly SSI as Percentage of the NLIHC's Housing Wage

State	SSI as an Hourly Wage	NLIHC Housing Wage	Hourly SSI as % of 1-Bedroom Housing Wage
Alabama	\$3.25	\$8.48	38.3%
Alaska	\$5.34	\$13.56	39.4%
Arizona	\$3.25	\$12.12	26.8%
Arkansas	\$3.25	\$8.12	40.0%
California	\$4.56	\$17.38	26.2%
Colorado	\$3.47	\$12.60	27.5%
Connecticut	\$4.31	\$14.73	29.3%
Delaware	\$3.28	\$12.52	26.2%
District of Columbia	\$3.25	\$20.10	16.2%
Florida	\$3.25	\$12.96	25.1%
Georgia	\$3.25	\$11.69	27.8%
Hawaii	\$3.25	\$16.94	19.2%
Idaho	\$3.55	\$9.17	38.7%
Illinois	\$3.25	\$13.38	24.3%
Indiana	\$3.25	\$9.62	33.8%
Iowa	\$3.25	\$8.52	38.1%
Kansas	\$3.25	\$9.10	35.7%
Kentucky	\$3.25	\$8.19	39.7%
Louisiana	\$3.25	\$9.33	34.8%
Maine	\$3.31	\$10.29	32.2%
Maryland	\$3.25	\$15.75	20.6%
Massachusetts	\$3.91	\$17.60	22.2%
Michigan	\$3.33	\$11.29	29.5%
Minnesota	\$3.72	\$12.29	30.3%
Mississippi	\$3.25	\$8.33	39.0%
Missouri	\$3.25	\$9.67	33.6%
Montana	\$3.25	\$8.27	39.3%
Nebraska	\$3.32	\$8.87	37.4%
Nevada	\$3.25	\$14.23	22.8%
New Hampshire	\$3.41	\$13.52	25.2%
New Jersey	\$3.43	\$17.33	19.8%
New Mexico	\$3.25	\$9.46	34.4%
New York	\$3.76	\$17.23	21.8%
North Carolina	\$3.25	\$10.52	30.9%
North Dakota	\$3.25	\$7.75	41.9%
Ohio	\$3.25	\$9.52	34.1%
Oklahoma	\$3.54	\$8.44	41.9%
Oregon	\$3.26	\$10.79	30.2%
Pennsylvania	\$3.41	\$11.19	30.5%
Rhode Island	\$3.58	\$14.04	25.5%
South Carolina	\$3.25	\$9.75	33.3%
South Dakota	\$3.34	\$7.94	42.1%
Tennessee	\$3.25	\$9.21	35.3%
Texas	\$3.25	\$11.13	29.2%
Utah	\$3.25	\$10.67	30.5%
Vermont	\$3.55	\$10.92	32.5%
Virginia	\$3.25	\$13.92	23.3%
Washington	\$3.36	\$11.63	28.9%
West Virginia	\$3.25	\$7.71	42.2%
Wisconsin	\$3.74	\$10.02	37.3%
Wyoming	\$3.31	\$8.29	39.9%
NATIONAL	\$3.56	\$13.00	27.4%

rental housing costs. By comparing monthly SSI benefits to the NLIHC's Housing Wage, housing advocates have an additional tool to illustrate the significant gap between housing costs and income for people with disabilities.

Table 5 indicates that, as a national average, the Housing Wage that must be earned in order for a low-income person in 2004 to rent an affordable one-bedroom unit was \$13.00 per hour – \$7.85 *higher* than the federal minimum wage of \$5.15. Monthly SSI income is equivalent to an hourly wage of only \$3.56 — \$1.59 *below* the federal minimum wage and less than one-third of the Housing Wage. The comparison of SSI to the Housing Wage demonstrates that people with disabilities currently receiving SSI would need to more than triple their current income to be able to afford the rent for a modest one-bedroom rental unit.

Housing Affordability for People with Disabilities in Your Community

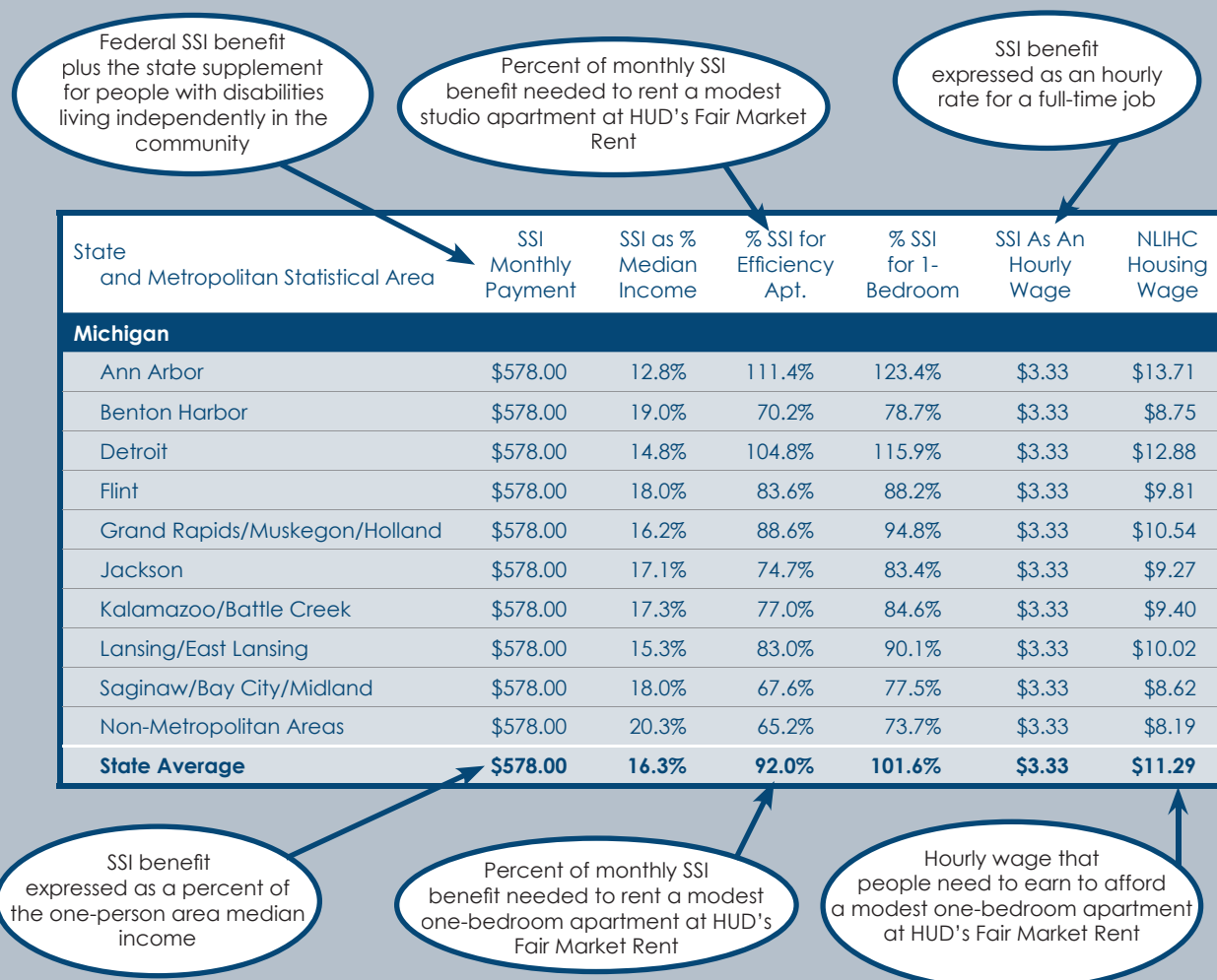
People with disabilities, their families, and their advocates can learn more about the housing affordability crisis in their community by viewing state and local housing market information contained in Appendix A of *Priced Out in 2004*.

Figure E is taken from Appendix A and illustrates local housing market information for the State of Michigan that can be found in *Priced Out in 2004*. In 2004, Michigan had SSI benefits equal to \$578 per month. Statewide, this income was equal to only 16.3 percent of the median income. Within Michigan's federally defined housing market areas the cost of a one-bedroom rental unit ranged from a low of 73.7 percent of SSI benefits in the rural non-metropolitan areas of the state to a high of 123.4 percent in the Ann Arbor market area.

Because Appendix A presents rent and income information within a context that is familiar to state and local housing officials, it is an extremely helpful tool for housing advocacy purposes. It can be used by disability advocates to engage state and local housing officials, and provide specific information on the housing needs of people with disabilities in that housing market area.

Figure E

From Appendix A of *Priced Out in 2004: Local Housing Market Data for the State of Michigan*



Priced Out in 2004 can be obtained online at www.tacinc.org, or by ordering a complimentary copy from TAC using the order form on page 11.

Conclusion

The fourth edition of *Priced Out* makes a clear and compelling case that only an ongoing monthly housing subsidy – such as provided through HUD’s Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and the Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program – is sufficient to close the extreme affordability gap between SSI income and rental housing costs. In a cruel irony, recent federal proposals such as HUD’s Flexible Voucher Program legislation would reduce rather than expand these subsidies for the poorest Americans with disabilities at a time of their greatest need. Recent HUD legisla-

tive proposals would have eliminated policies that help people who rely on SSI to access Section 8 vouchers. HUD also proposed cutting funding for the Section 811 program for Fiscal Year 2006 despite the fact that there are thousands of people with disabilities currently living in restrictive and expensive publicly-funded facilities who could benefit from less costly permanent supportive housing.

The findings highlighted in *Priced Out in 2004* must be a wake-up call for all government officials who fail to make the housing needs of people with disabilities a high priority. As advocates and self-advocates, we must use this data to build the political will to change government policies and promote a significant expansion of affordable and accessible housing for people with disabilities in every community in the United States.

How to Use the Information in *Priced Out in 2004*

The information in *Priced Out in 2004* can be used by advocates to document the housing needs of people with disabilities – including the extreme poverty of people with disabilities receiving SSI benefits. Most importantly, *Priced Out in 2004* can be used to prove that people with disabilities receiving SSI benefits cannot afford rental housing without and on-going rental subsidy and that the housing crisis they face is getting worse each year.

The disability community can use the information in this report to engage national, state, and local housing officials in a dialogue about the housing needs of people with disabilities. At the state and local level, housing officials are responsible for developing strategies and annual plans that determine how federal housing resources are used.

There are four significant housing planning activities that disability advocates can use to successfully influence the use of federal housing resources:

- The Consolidated Plan
- The Public Housing Agency (PHA) Plan
- The Continuum of Care
- The Qualified Allocation Plan

These federally mandated plans control billions of dollars of federal housing funding that can be used to expand affordable and accessible housing opportunities for people with disabilities.

Consolidated Plan

The Consolidated Plan (ConPlan) is the “master plan” for affordable housing in local communities and states. Each year, Congress appropriates billions of dollars (approximately \$6.3 billion for fiscal year 2005) that are distributed by HUD directly to all states, most urban counties, and certain “entitlement communities.”

The ConPlan is intended to be a comprehensive, long-range planning document describing housing needs, market conditions, and housing strategies, and outlining an action plan for the use of federal housing funds. The ConPlan is the best chance to go on record about the housing crisis facing people with disabilities in the community or state

and demand that people with disabilities receive their “fair share” of federal housing funds distributed through the ConPlan process. The information in *Priced Out in 2004* should be provided to the housing officials preparing the ConPlan, and included in the final plan submitted to HUD.

More important than this documentation, however, is the need to convince these housing officials that people with disabilities should be receiving their “fair share” of federal housing funding distributed through the ConPlan process. The information included in *Priced Out in 2004* can help to begin a dialogue that results in more federal housing funding being directed to assist people with disabilities in local communities. To learn more about how the disability community can use the ConPlan process to influence housing officials, see *Piecing It All Together in Your Community: Playing the Housing Game*, a TAC publication available online at www.tacinc.org.

Public Housing Agency Plan

Public housing reform legislation enacted in 1998 gave PHAs more flexibility and control over how federal public housing and Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program funds are used in their communities. Along with this flexibility and control came new requirements, including the creation of a new five-year comprehensive planning document known as the Public Housing Agency Plan (PHA Plan).

In consultation with a Resident Advisory Board, each PHA is required to complete a PHA Plan that describes the agency’s overall mission for serving low-income and very low-income families, and the activities that will be undertaken to meet the housing needs of these families. Under federal law, the PHA Plan should also be consistent with the ConPlan for the jurisdiction.

Like the ConPlan, the PHA Plan includes a statement of the housing needs of low- and very low-income people in the community and describes how the PHA’s resources – specifically federal public housing and the Section 8 rental assistance programs – will be used to meet these needs. For example, through the PHA Plan, local housing officials

could decide to direct more Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program funding to people with disabilities receiving SSI benefits. For more information on the PHA Plan, see *Opening Doors, Issue 8: Affordable Housing in Your Community. What You Need to Know! What You Need to Do!*, a TAC publication available online at www.tacinc.org.

Continuum of Care

HUD's third housing plan, the Continuum of Care, documents a community's strategy for addressing homelessness, including a description of what role HUD's McKinney/Vento Homeless Assistance funds play in that strategy. The HUD McKinney/Vento Homeless Assistance programs have formed the backbone of local efforts intended to address the many needs of homeless individuals and families in states and communities across the nation. Unlike the ConPlan and the PHA Plan, which are required by law, the Continuum of Care was created by HUD as a policy to help coordinate the provision of housing and services to homeless people. Since 1994, with the introduction of Continuum of Care planning, communities have been encouraged to envision, organize, and plan comprehensive and long-term solutions to address the problem of homelessness. The strategic planning conducted through this process also forms the basis of a Continuum of Care plan and application to HUD for Homeless Assistance funds.

As with the other HUD housing plans, Continuum of Care planning presents a valuable opportunity for the disability community to provide input regarding the housing and supportive services needs of people with disabilities who are homeless, including those people who need permanent supportive housing. For more information on the Continuum

of Care, see *How to Be A Player in the Continuum of Care*, a TAC publication available online at www.tacinc.org.

Qualified Allocation Plan

When Congress created the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program in 1986 it included the requirement that states develop a strategic housing planning document describing how LIHTC funds would be utilized to meet the housing needs and priorities of the state. In accordance with this law, prior to allocating tax credits, each state must have a federally approved Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The QAP outlines the state's affordable housing priorities for the use of tax credits as well as the tax credit application process. The state must solicit public comment on a draft QAP before it submits the final QAP to the federal government.

Federal law requires that the QAP give priority to projects that serve the lowest-income households and remain affordable for the longest period of time. In addition, by law, 10 percent of a state's annual LIHTC allocation must be reserved for non-profit organizations.

Some states have additional set-asides within the LIHTC program to encourage the creation of certain types of housing. For example, the Massachusetts 2004 QAP includes a preference for special needs housing, including housing for people with disabilities. For more information about the QAP and the LIHTC program, see *Opening Doors, Issue 26: Using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program to Create Affordable Housing for People with Disabilities*, a TAC publication available online at www.tacinc.org.

How to Get Your Free Copy of *Priced Out in 2004*

1. Email your name, organization, and postal address to: publications@tacinc.org. Please put "Priced Out in 2004" in the subject line.
(or)
2. Fill out this form and mail it to: TAC, 535 Boylston Street, Suite 1301, Boston MA 02116.

Only one complimentary copy will be available. If multiple copies are needed, they may be printed from the TAC website at www.tacinc.org.

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Cornell University Announces *First Annual Disability Status Reports*

To receive *Opening Doors* by email, send a request to publications@tacinc.org. Be sure to mention *Opening Doors* in the subject.

Cornell University, in collaboration with the American Association of People with Disabilities, released the *First Annual Disability Status Reports* in early October 2005. The Status Reports provide policy makers, disability advocates, reporters, and the public with a summary of the most recent (2003 and 2004) demographic and economic statistics on the working age (ages 21-64) population with disabilities. They are available at the national and state level and contain information on population size, prevalence, employment, earnings, poverty, household income, home ownership, and activity limitations of working age people with disabilities, as well as the composition of this population by age, race, gender, and educational attainment. Comparisons are made to working age people without disabilities, across types of disabilities, and to the previous year. These reports are available for download at www.DisabilityStatistics.org. Future Status Reports will address the school- and retirement-age populations and eventually expand to education and health-related issues.

The Status Reports are produced by the Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC), which is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The Status Reports contribute to fulfilling the StatsRRTC's mission to promote the effective use of existing disability data and statistics.

Opening Doors

A Housing Publication for the Disability Community

with support from the Melville Charitable Trust

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