

“The Rent Eats First.”

By Pamela Wolf

Matthew Desmond wrote this quote in his book *Evicted. Poverty and Profit in the American City*. And I can't begin to tell you how true that is.

It is disheartening to see that the budget debate in Washington largely ignores the very real impact that spending cuts will have on our communities.

In Alexandria and across the nation, far too many families— including low income seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and families with children — struggle to keep a roof over their heads or are experiencing homelessness. More families are renting their homes than ever before, and our nation's investments in affordable housing have not kept pace. As a result, rents are increasing everywhere.

In Virginia alone, 1 in 4 renters are extremely low income. And in D.C., almost 30% are.

Despite the growing demand, three out of every four families in need of housing assistance are turned away due to a lack of funding. Families are often forced to make harmful tradeoffs and skimp on groceries, medical care, and other basic needs. Every state and congressional district is directly impacted.

The new budget proposes to further slash federal investments in affordable housing by \$7.4 billion or 15% - a move that could increase homelessness and housing poverty in our community. This is the wrong approach.

Families in our community have already been hurt by cuts to affordable housing and community development resources.

Instead of reducing our nation's investments in affordable housing, we need to make a bold and sustained commitment to ensure that everyone has a safe, accessible and affordable home. Because when we invest in affordable homes, we invest in people, our communities, and America as a whole — from increased employment and economic mobility to improved health and better education.

That's why advocates, elected officials, and concerned citizens are joining together to participate in the national Our Homes, Our Voices week of action from July 22-29 to bring more attention to the affordable housing crisis in the community. We firmly believe that all people deserve an affordable home, and no one should be forced to give up food and basic healthcare to keep a roof over their heads.

It is time to expand affordable housing investments in our communities, not slash them.