Alliance for Housing Justice

Rent Control, Housing Supply, and Affordability

As rising rents continue to strain households throughout the country, advocates and policymakers are increasingly exploring rent control as a tool to protect tenants from displacement, preserve affordable housing, and restrict predatory rent increases.

The empirical evidence substantiates that rent control has these positive effects for renters and their communities and highlights how the policies that organized tenants are fighting for will not have the pitfalls that industry opponents misleadingly claim are inevitable.[1]

Across the country, rent control and robust development go hand-in-hand.

No research study, anywhere in the U.S., has shown a decline in new construction as a result of rent stabilization.[2,3,4,5,6]

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[1] Tram Hoang and Amee Chew. *Our Homes, Our Future: Building the Power to Win Rent Control for Stable Communities*. PolicyLink; Popular Democracy In Action; The Right to the City Alliance, 2025, p. 40-56, 61-3. https://www.policylink.org/sites/plorg/files/2025-08/Our%2520Homes%2520Our%2520Future%25202025%2520-%2520Full%2520Report%2520-%2520English.pdf.

[2] Edward G. Goetz, "Commentary: Rent Stabilization's Record of Success in the US Contradicts R.I. Critics' Concerns," Rhode Island Politics, *The Boston Globe*, February 9, 2026, https://www.bostonglobe.com/2026/02/09/metro/commentary-ri-rent-control-housing/.

[3] https://dornsife.usc.edu/eri/publications/rent-matters/; https://www.policylink.org/resources/tools/housing-anti-displacement/rent-stabilization; https://www.policylink.org/sites/plorg/files/2025-08/Our%2520Homes%2520Our%2520Future%25202025%2520-%2520Full%2520Report%2520-%2520English.pdf

[4] Studies in New Jersey, the Bay Area, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Washington DC, and elsewhere have not found a negative impact on construction rates. Ambrosius, Joshua D. et al., "Forty Years of Rent Control: Reexamining New Jersey's Moderate Local Policies after the Great Recession," *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*, no. 49 (August 14, 2015): 121–33, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264275115001122; John I. Gilderbloom and Lin Ye, "Thirty Years of Rent Control: A Survey of New Jersey Cities," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2007): 207–20; Gilderbloom, "Moderate Rent Control: Its Impact on the Quality and Quantity of the Housing Stock," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (December 1981): 123–42.

[5] Miriam Zuk, "Rent Control: The Key to Neighborhood Stabilization? | Urban Displacement Project," September 9, 2015, https://belonging.berkeley.edu/rent-control-key-neighborhood-stabilization; Planning & Development Department, *Rent Control in the City of Berkeley, 1978 to 1994: A Background Report* (Planning & Development Department, City of Berkeley, May 27, 1998), https://rentboard.berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/Historical_Berkeley_Rent_Control_1978-1994_1998_Planning_Dept_report%20%281%29.pdf; Kenneth Baar, Patrick Burns, and Daniel Flaming, *San Jose ARO Study: Final Report*, Economic Roundtable, 2016, p. 177, https://economicrt.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/San-Jose-ARO-Study-ERt-Final-Report.pdf.

[6] Dennis Keating, Michael B. Teitz, and Andrejs Skaburskis, eds., *Rent Control: Regulation and the Rental Housing Market* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Center For Urban Policy Research), 1998; J. W. Mason, "Considerations on Rent Control," November 14, 2019, https://jwmason.org/slackwire/considerations-on-rent-control/; Tom Slater, "From Displacements to Rent

Increased housing production of both affordable and market-rate units goes hand-in-hand with robust rent control. While not every jurisdiction with rent control will always be in the midst of a building boom, broader market conditions, particularly relating to regional job growth and access to credit, shape permitting and construction levels to a much greater extent.

For example, comprehensive studies of cities in New Jersey and California have found no statistically significant relationship between the presence and intensity of municipal rent control policies and new rental construction.[7] In Portland, Maine, which has one of the nation's most robust rent control ordinances with no exemption for new construction, developers completed 2,166 units from 2021 through 2025, the first five years of the regulation's enforcement, after building just 1,665 units in the preceding five years.[8] Likewise, when Massachusetts eliminated municipal rent control policies in 1995, a study found no corresponding increase in new construction or supply.[9]

The evidence shows rent stabilization policies do not hamper new development. Attempts to boost housing supply should focus on other factors like subsidy for affordable and social housing, access to credit, insurance costs, permitting delays, and the cost of construction materials.

Rent control is consistent with fiscal health at the municipal level.

Across the country, local governments rely heavily on property tax revenues to support their operations. Assessed property values affect the amount of funds that local governments can feasibly raise through property taxes. A study of 74 rent-controlled cities in New Jersey found no statistically significant impact of rent control on property values,[10] thereby undermining the argument that rent control harms local fiscal health. Moreover, several rent-controlled cities in California

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Control and Housing Justice," *Urban Geography* 42, no. 5 (May 28, 2021): 701–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2021.1958473; Mark Paul, James K. Galbraith, Isabella Weber, Janelle Jones, and J. W. Mason, "Re: Tenant Protections for Enterprise-Backed Multifamily Properties Request for Input," July 28, 2023, https://peoplesaction.org/wp-content/uploads/Economist-Sign-on-Letter_-FHFA-RFI-Response-1.pdf.

[7] Ambrosius, Joshua D. et al., "Forty Years of Rent Control: Reexamining New Jersey's Moderate Local Policies after the Great Recession," *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*, no. 49 (August 14, 2015): 121–33, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264275115001122; John I. Gilderbloom & Lin Ye, *Thirty Years of Rent Control: A Survey of New Jersey Cities*, 29 J. URBAN AFF. 207 (Apr. 19, 2007); Chris Alvarez Campbell, Derek Hyra & David J. Schwegman, *Evaluating Rent Control Intensity in California Cities, 2010-2019,* 36 HOUS. POL'Y DEBATE 141 (Nov. 21, 2025), https://hpri.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Evaluating-Rent-Control-Intensity-in-California-Cities-2010-2019.pdf

[8] City of Portland, *Housing Dashboard*, portlandmaine.gov (last visited July 27, 2026), https://www.portlandmaine.gov/housing-dashboard-0.

[9] David P. Sims, *Out of control: What can we learn from the end of Massachusetts rent control?* 61 J. URBAN ECON. 129 (Jan. 2007)

[10] Joshua D. Ambrosius et al., *Forty years of rent control: Reexamining New Jersey's moderate local policies after the great recession*, 49 INT. J. URBAN POL'Y & PLANNING 121 (Aug. 14, 2015), https://jwmason.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Ambrosius-et-al-2015-Forty-Years-of-Rent-Control.pdf

achieved robust growth in property tax revenues in the 2000s and 2010s.[11] As with housing construction, other factors in the housing market—particularly robust regional growth in high-wage job categories—play a greater role in influencing property values than the presence or strength of rent control alone. Moreover, if they are effective, it is also the intent of supply-side interventions like zoning reform to ultimately reduce inflated property values, and thus these policy interventions may also present trade-offs relating to local fiscal health.

Researchers, policy analysts, and advocates have rebutted the claims in a recent report released by the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, which misconstrues the relationship between rent control and property values.[12] Their report based its projections on two studies that support their initial claim, one of which was based on minimal post-implementation data[13] and the second of which studied the aftermath of lifting rent control, a different factual scenario than that presented by rent control's adoption.

Market-rate development cannot on its own ensure housing is deeply and permanently affordable; rent control and public subsidy are essential, complementary tools for addressing our affordability crisis.

If not pursued in combination with tenant protections like rent control and public investments in affordable and social housing, "Abundance" strategies to develop more housing do little to expand housing opportunities for low-income renters. Market-rate housing takes many years if not decades to filter or "trickle down" to low-income households. Even when rents appear to decline on average after new construction, studies have shown that, because the housing market is segmented into submarkets, new construction can simultaneously decrease rents for luxury properties while increasing rents for low-income households in some market conditions.[14]

Filtering effects occur too slowly and unevenly to address urgent affordability needs—in fact, even in regions that add substantial numbers of new units, the share

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[11] Leslie Gordon, *Strengthening Communities Through Rent Control and Just-Cause Evictions: Case Studies from Berkeley, Santa Monica, and Richmond* (Urban Habitat, Jan. 2018), https://urbanhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/UH-2018-Strengthening-Communities-Through-Rent-Control_0.pdf

[12] *Setting the Record Straight on Rent Control in Massachusetts* (Keep Massachusetts Home, Apr. 2026), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/68d18ecf0f97ba0c49e932ca/t/69d81ca6624609024de37810/1775770790264/GBREB+report.pdf

[13] Amee Chew et al., *The Truth About Rent Stabilization in St. Paul: A proven solution that protects communities from predatory rent hikes* (Right to the City, 2026), https://cohomesforall.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Truth-About-Rent-Stabilization-in-St.-Paul.pdf

[14] Anthony Damiano & Chris Frenier, *Build Baby Build? Housing Submarkets and the Effects of New Construction on Existing Rents* (Ctr. on Urban & Regional Affairs, Working Paper, Oct. 16, 2020), https://www.cura.umn.edu/research/build-baby-build-housing-submarkets-and-effects-new-construction-existing-rents

of homes affordable to lower-income renters often stagnates or declines.[15] And, in a system that relies upon filtering to deliver affordability, the units that become affordable to low-income households will always be the oldest, least habitable, and most spatially segregated homes within a regional housing market.

These findings highlight the need for rent control alongside further investments into affordable housing development and equitable zoning reform. A recent multi-state study found that rent control is associated with a statistically significant increase in units affordable to extremely low-income households, offset by a decrease in units affordable only to high-income renters.[16] Rent control remains one of the most effective tools to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing and increase the supply of affordable units for low-income families.

The time is right for rent control.

The evidence is clear: rent control is effective at protecting tenants, and state and local officials can design protections in ways that enhance their impact. Rent control—along with investment in social housing and equitable zoning reform—is an essential component in any serious, comprehensive solution to the housing affordability and inequality crises. In a political environment where increased investment in housing subsidy from the federal government is unlikely to materialize soon, it is also a solution that state and local actors can implement right now with immediate impact, rather than waiting for circumstances beyond their control to shift. The time is right to adopt and implement rent control right now.

[15] Zachary McRae, Shamaal Sheppard & Adit Roy, *Abundance for Who?: Housing Access and Affordability in High-Growth Metropolitan Areas* (Georgetown Ctr. on Poverty & Inequality, Jan. 2026), https://www.georgetownpoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/AbundanceforWho.pdf.
[16] Christina Stacy et al., *Rent control and the supply of affordable housing*, 68 J. OF HOUS. ECON. 102063 (June 2025), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1051137725000221