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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COMER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 9, 2018.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JAMES COMER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 8, 2018, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of every family struggling to pay rent, every student facing homelessness, and every city that is seeing historic communities displaced.

We are facing an affordable housing crisis, and we cannot ignore this epidemic. Over 38 million families struggle to pay rent and put food on the table every day because they spend more than a third of their income on

housing. Now, in my district, in the East Bay in northern California, the average renter in Oakland would be forced to spend a staggering—mind you, staggering—70 percent of their income on housing if they were to move today. That is 70 percent. Clearly, the affordable housing crisis is off the scale in my district.

In April, I sent an email to my constituents asking for their stories and suggestions on how to address this very important issue. Today I would like to share just a few of those stories which really touched my heart.

One woman shared how, being unable to afford a place to live, she had to put herself in harm's way to have shelter. She said: I stayed in an unsafe and shared housing situation much longer than I would have had I been able to find an affordable place to move. I have found a place now but no longer have any disposable income. I worry that an unexpected event could lead to being unhoused. I have many friends who are single mothers with children who are sleeping in cars or bouncing from couch to couch.

The housing crisis has also taken a devastating toll on seniors in my district. One woman wrote: Many of my longtime friends and acquaintances have been forced to move out of the State. My husband and I have lived in an old place for a long time, and the rent is relatively low; but the building may be sold, and I don't know what we would do. I am a cancer survivor and fear moving out of the State would make me lose my health insurance. I would also have a hard time finding a new job at 62. We have applied at numerous senior housing apartments, but all have long waiting lists.

These stories also highlighted the impact of the housing crisis on public sector workers and students in our community.

One gentleman wrote: As a teacher, I cannot afford to stay in Oakland. Home

ownership is out of the question. Even as a dedicated public servant, I can't afford to work in urban schools in the Bay area.

A former student wrote me: I had to withdraw from classes at UC Berkeley so I could find stable housing and enough income to afford my monthly rent.

Mr. Speaker, our community, our country, cannot function without nurses, teachers, or young people living in decent affordable housing. We need to solve this crisis before it is too late. These stories represent just a small number of the responses I received. I heard from many constituents who are delaying having children and passing up opportunities to open a business or switch careers because they cannot afford to move or to live where they want to live.

I heard from some residents who live in cars, on couches, or on the streets because the cost of rent has soared. Now I see, sadly, homeless camps with sofas, chairs, and tables. So many people have been evicted with nowhere to go.

Believe you me, there are many more in my district and across America who are homeless right now: seniors, veterans, single moms raising children. They have nowhere to sleep at night. We must do better so that no one is forced to live on the streets. We must do better to ensure that no child is homeless. And we must do better to ensure that no senior has to choose between food and rent. We must do better because there is no option. The affordable housing crisis is tearing apart families and communities. This is not a partisan issue; it is a human one.

That is why I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will cosponsor my affordable housing resolution which I introduced yesterday, H. Con. Res. 120, and affirm that all people deserve access to basic living standards. We need to begin this debate, and it needs

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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