Our economy and our workforce are strong. In Georgia, we enjoy vibrant communities and one of the most dynamic and competitive economies in the nation. As a state with a vibrant economy (ranked eleventh among all states in 2019), we have a strong competitive advantage, especially compared to surrounding states.

However, if we do not act now to solve the shortage of affordable homes across the state, we are in jeopardy of losing those advantages. No one thrives if we price out young adults who have the talents and skills to strengthen our businesses. No one thrives if businesses are ready to leave or are reluctant to come to Georgia because they can’t attract and retain a workforce. No one thrives if families struggle to put a roof over their heads.

The more our residents succeed, the more Georgia thrives—and we have proven that we have the will, the creativity and the solutions to do so. Georgia only thrives is we prepare for our future—planning for the needs of our businesses, our homes and our communities.

What Would Help?

We agree with Governor Kemp: our zip codes should never be a stronger predictor of our success than our determination.

Yet, across the State of Georgia, with housing costs outpacing what we earn, that’s exactly what’s happening. Despite a strong economy and growing workforce, many parts of the State are reeling from a rising cost of living that traps them in homes that are too costly or communities that are not thriving. Since where we live is such a strong predictor of our future success, we all have a stake in ensuring that all families have a decent place to live—no matter where in the State they reside or what kind of jobs they have.

In Georgia today someone earning the minimum wage would have to work an astonishing 97-hours each week just to afford the average two-bedroom apartment. This means that parents are working more hours to support their families than the time they get to spend with their children. We all know that this cannot be good for Georgia’s future—it means that too many Georgia children will not have the foundation they need to thrive here. The future for our children is literally tied to our ability to come up with common sense solutions.

▪ Working Families Need Affordable Homes. There is no community in Georgia where a person working a 40-hour per week, low-wage job can afford a modest rental apartment.

▪ Seniors Need Affordable Homes. Seniors are the fastest growing demographic across our State, and they are particularly vulnerable to the rising costs of housing. Our seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot compete with rising rents and the cost of owning a home. Over one-third of Georgia’s seniors need an affordable home.

▪ Our Most Vulnerable Georgians Need Affordable Homes. At some point in our lives, most of us will need a helping hand. We can achieve better outcomes in a more cost-effective way when we coordinate services to meet people where they live—for the homeless, veterans and people with disabilities. Supportive housing saves the State an average of $22,000 per household annually from unnecessary institutionalization, and we have an estimated need for 23,000 supportive housing units.
We need to act now. Every day that we delay making smart investments in our future, we put our economy in jeopardy and deepen the financial distress of working families.

The Good News:
We have common sense solutions that work—and our leaders believe in the power of creating thriving communities for all.

“As Governor, I will work to ensure that someone’s potential is not determined by their zip code or county.”

Governor Brian Kemp,
State of the State Address, January 17, 2019

We all win when we ensure that our children have a safe place to do homework; young people can plan for their futures here in Georgia; and seniors can thrive in communities that they have helped to build. We all win when we ensure that our teachers, nurses, first responders, and service workers can live near jobs and come to work rested.

An affordable home puts disposable income in the pockets of Georgia’s residents and helps them build wealth so that they can afford childcare, save for college, and support small business in their communities.

Our Ask is Simple: Increase Access to Safe, Affordable and Stable Homes

- Reduce unnecessary penalties to tenants and excess expenses to both tenants and landlords by requiring a 7-day written notice with the opportunity to cure the failure to pay rent or other defect prior to initiating eviction proceedings. Support HB 1022.

- Support creation of a Joint House-Senate Study Committee to review instances and effects of lead exposure on children and address the ways to prevent and address the consequences of childhood lead poisoning. Support HR 1280.

- Support communities in creating incentives for private developers to build affordable housing through the waiver of development impact fees without the requirement to replenish funds from other sources. Support SB 322.

- Support legislation to amend Georgia’s state Fair Housing Act to help restore certification by HUD as a Fair Housing Act Program that will make Georgia eligible to receive federal funds to process and address fair housing complaints. Support HB 969.

Our competitive advantage, the expertise of our leadership and the resilience of our workforce, makes this an investment that will pay dividends for decades to come.

For More Information:

Kandice Allen Mitchell, Director of State & Local Policy
404.698.4615 | kamitchell@enterprisecommunity.org

Elizabeth Appley, Esq., Public Policy Advocate
404.523.3800 | eja@appleylaw.com

Enterprise Community Partners | Southeast
Enterprise Community Partners is a nonprofit organization working for more than 35 years to create affordable housing in diverse, thriving communities in Georgia and across the country. We provide capital, programmatic solutions and policy assistance to build stronger communities through well-designed, affordable homes connected to jobs, transportation, health care and quality education.