



## **A HOME WORKS FOR EVERYONE; South Carolina Coalition Creating Awareness of Cost Crisis**

COLUMBIA, SC - Most South Carolinians are *well* aware of the effects a booming housing market can have on their lives. Some benefit from soaring prices on the homes they sell. Others feel it differently; an estimated 42% of renter households do not earn sufficient income to afford a two-bedroom unit at the Fair Market Rent, let alone consider buying a house. A statewide consortium of organizations is setting out to raise awareness of South Carolina's growing housing affordability gap and to help the public understand why elected leaders hold the key to safe homes for a growing number of residents.

The housing gap continues to widen leaving behind hard working members of the community such as teachers, law enforcement officers and a handful of other public servants that keep communities functioning. It's a trend that has members of the Affordable Housing Coalition of South Carolina worried.

“As South Carolina's housing market continues to price instrumental community members out of the market, communities risk losing their daily functionality,” said Robert Thomas, president of the Coalition's board. “Imagine a day without sales clerks, bank tellers, police or firefighters and teachers.”

When it comes to the vitality and wellbeing of South Carolina's communities, affordable housing is key, Thomas and others say. And where affordable housing is lacking, community members are forced to deal with overcrowding and substandard living conditions. Employers struggle to find the workforce needed for businesses to succeed. In some communities, workers are brought to work each day by buses from homes located 90 minutes or further away.

According to the Federal Government, housing is considered “affordable” if it costs no more than 30% of one’s monthly household income. The current minimum wage in South Carolina is \$5.15. However, according to the Center for Housing Policy, residents in South Carolina’s Upstate region must earn an hourly wage of \$9.65 to afford the rent for a one bedroom apartment, Midlands region workers must earn \$10.79 per hour and workers in the Lowcountry would need to earn \$10.94 for the same apartment.

“We know that the American Dream of home ownership is still the gold standard for many,” said Gloria Bowden, Executive Director of the Columbia-based Coalition. “But increasingly, our residents dream of simply residing in a structure that is safe, dry and affordable. Absent this basic human right, it’s very difficult for families to function, for business to function and for communities to prosper.”

**CALL TO ACTION.** Encourage zoning that welcomes affordable housing in your neighborhood.