



March 17, 2021

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families Supports HB 1563, which would create an “implied warranty of habitability” in Arkansas. That means rental units would be required be structurally sound and weatherproofed, and have working plumbing, electricity, and heat and air. It would also require basic safety measures like working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. Arkansas stands alone as the only state without this kind of law in effect.

Every family deserves housing that is safe and livable, but it’s especially critical for children. Research shows that housing quality has a big impact of kids’ health and well-being. Growing up in substandard housing has [negative effects on child development](#). Poor quality housing is [associated](#) with poorer health and more medical visits and hospitalizations for kids. These negative impacts on child development and health have lifelong implications, making it harder for kids to do well in school which can reduce their [economic opportunities as adults](#).

Unfortunately, children in Arkansas are more vulnerable than average. Families with kids are more likely to live in rental households. Around a third of Arkansans are renters, but that number is about 4 in 10 for families with children. That means hundreds of thousands of kids are potentially vulnerable to housing that could be bad for their health.

Currently, families who are exposed to unlivable housing conditions have no legal recourse to break their lease, which means they’re stuck paying for housing that’s harming their health. Being forced to pay for housing that harms your health makes it even harder for families to save and build wealth, especially families from historically marginalized communities.

Black and brown people are more likely to be renters and are at greater risk from a lack of rental protections. When reviewing adverse child outcomes, several of them are directly associated with the quality of housing the children live in. At the very least, we should ensure rental housing isn’t contributing to costly health issues and their associated medical bills.

Every other state already guarantees families that rent these basic rights. Arkansas should join them by passing HB 1563.