High housing costs driving more Californians into poverty

High rents are driving more Californians into poverty, said a report out Tuesday from an affordable housing group.

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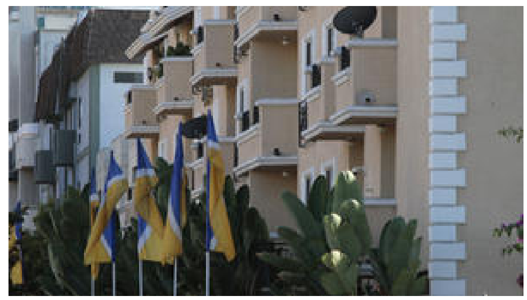
A new study by the California Housing Partnership found that the state's lowest-income households spend two-thirds of their income on housing, leaving little money for food, healthcare, transportation and other needs.

And 1.5 million low-income households -- half of them in Los Angeles and Orange counties and the Inland Empire -- do not have access to housing they can afford.

Rents rise again in Southern California, but not so fast this time



Federal measures of poverty do not include housing costs, but when they are factored in, according to the housing group's report, the share of people living below the poverty line in California climbs to 22%, from 16.2% in federal reports. In high-cost Orange County, including housing costs nearly doubles the poverty rate, to 24.3%.

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The problem has grown worse in recent years as rents have climbed and incomes stagnated. The annual median rent in California has grown 21% since 2000, while median income for renter households has fallen 8%. Meanwhile, state and federal funding for affordable housing has dropped sharply in recent years with the end of redevelopment agencies in California and the exhaustion of state bond funds.

The report comes as affordable housing advocates descend on Sacramento on Tuesday to push for more funding for low-income housing. Several bills before the Legislature, including a package proposed by Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins (D-San Diego), would add money to housing programs.

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