

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 24, 2021

To: Marisa A. Zapata, PhD
Director, PSU-HRAC

From: Lauren E. M. Everett
Graduate Research Assistant, PSU-HRAC

Subject: Updates on COVID-19 and disaster response, housing, and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, May 17 - 23.

News¹

1. Households with children will face a greater risk of homelessness than households without children, when the eviction moratorium ends June 30. ([Child Trends](#))
2. Investor purchase of homes is up this quarter, accounting for one in seven of all single-family homes sales in the U.S., and one in five of all low-priced homes. According to an economist at Redfin, investors are competing with private buyers to purchase available housing stock and then renting it out, likely making the shortage of homes for sale even worse. ([Redfin](#))
3. In the small coastal town of Brookings, OR, elected officials and homeless advocates have clashed over a proposed Project Turnkey hotel conversion program. ([Jefferson Public Radio](#))
4. Following in the footsteps of Oakland's [Moms 4 Housing](#), activist group [Tacoma Housing Now](#) is part of an informal nationwide movement to reclaim unoccupied buildings for unhoused community members. ([Christian Century](#))
5. A new study from the University of Texas at Austin has supported public health decision-making in the city, by projecting the number of hotel rooms needed to slow the transmission of COVID among people experiencing homelessness. ([UT News](#))
6. In King County (Seattle area) COVID has created new complexities in accessing homelessness services, with some community members receiving unprecedented support while others retreat further into the margins. ([Seattle Times](#))
7. *The New York Times Magazine* reports on how extended-stay hotels and motels have become the only housing option available for thousands of low-income households. In addition to a shortage of affordable housing, screening criteria like minimum credit scores present critical barriers in accessing stable housing. ([New York Times Magazine](#))
8. In Portland, OR the city has shifted their homeless encampment guidelines, from alignment with the CDC's guidance not to remove camps, to issuing 48 hour notice in the event that one or more qualifying conditions exist. The removal policy includes camps deemed a fire

¹ New stories are gathered from national and international publications, and are not HRAC's original reporting.

risk, a source of criminal activity, that prevent ADA compliance, impede school operations, or are close to untreated sewage or biohazard materials. ([Portland Mercury](#))

National HoUsed Campaign Call for Universal, Stable, and Affordable Housing (May 17):

Senator Amy Klobuchar, Minnesota, US Senate: This pandemic has put a magnifying glass on the housing situation, and as we see the light at the end of the tunnel we have to seize the moment to make sure that all Americans can access decent and affordable homes. In 1960 my parents, thanks to a GI loan my dad got, were able to buy this house. At that time it was an ‘emerging’ suburb in Minneapolis. I still remember the exposed wood ceiling. My mom lived in the house pretty much until she died. I still remember the brightly colored appliances. That GI loan helped them, and everyone should have that kind of access. When I became the county attorney I saw the impact of unstable housing. We know that in 2018 almost one in every four rental households were already paying over half of their income for rent. During the pandemic we’ve had several waves of funding for housing stability, including helping homeowners who are behind in their mortgage. We can also invest in the Housing Trust Fund to preserve public housing.

Guaranteeing Section 8 vouchers to all Americans and making it an entitlement rather than an appropriation. Creating portable personal savings accounts for housing emergencies, expanding the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, and expanding housing supply. The President’s American Jobs Plan includes creating 500,000 affordable homes. I wanted to introduce a new bill I’m working on, which empowers localities to effectively identify their housing challenges and implement solutions to expand their housing supply. It’s a competitive grant program for \$300 million a year to develop and implement housing policy programs, and has been endorsed by hundreds of local organizations. This should be bipartisan because I hear this from people of all stripes, both rural and urban. I want to thank you for your work and allowing me to say a few words, including sharing my memories of how important that house was for me growing up. Everyone should have the opportunity for a stable home.

Senator Patty Murray, Washington, US Senate: Thank you everyone for your amazing hard work over the past year to keep everyone housed during the pandemic. As you know we were already in a crisis. In Washington State we had a significant increase in homelessness recently, and we’ve seen more people grapple with housing insecurity. I have spoken with people with lived experience and with service providers. I’ve taken those stories and experiences all across the state back to Washington D.C. to fight for relief. Now thanks to many of the people on this call, relief is already going out to households across the country. This assistance can mean the difference between keeping a roof over your head. People of color are more likely to face housing insecurity than white people. This relief is going to go a long way toward helping communities of color stay housed. But this funding alone isn’t enough, as we were already experiencing a housing crisis. Getting back to where we were isn’t enough.

We need to invest in our housing infrastructure. The first piece is passing Biden's American Jobs Plan. It makes major investments in housing infrastructure that is long overdue, and would address systemic barriers to housing security. \$13 billion investment which would create or maintain 2 million residences. It would also include eliminating exclusionary zoning and reducing common bureaucratic barriers to creating housing. We have a critical opportunity to make bold investments in affordable housing. That's why I'm looking at adding funding to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, expanding the Section 8 voucher program, and other interventions. We no longer have a president who slashes funding for public housing authorities. Instead I was glad to see Biden's blueprint budget indicate that the White House will be working with us on this issue. I'm also glad we have a President who will work with us on increasing funding for a number of supports for working class and low-income households. I know how hard all of you work and how difficult your work is in a typical year. It's this work that keeps me going here in the Senate because I know we have so many people nationwide and in my state doing all they can.

Q: Do you have any advice for making the case that housing is infrastructure and we need to make bold investments?

A: First of all, thank you to everyone on this call for your advocacy, which was critical to getting the assistance we have so far. The infrastructure negotiations present an opportunity that can't be missed. Investing in affordable housing is part of the bigger picture and that's how I'm looking at this. We need people to reach out and talk to elected officials and tell your stories as you've been doing, especially when those officials are republicans. I know it will make a difference.

Neetu Nair, NLIHC: Our rental assistance database is now easier to use and includes federally funded programs. You can search by state. It includes over 970 programs, including over 350 federally funded programs. These federal programs are 65% of the programs that received federal funds. There are 47 states, 148 counties, 44 cities, and 84 tribal/territories/other programs. The four states that have not yet opened their programs are New York, North Carolina, North Dakota and Oregon (which is opening later this week). We update our public-facing information three times a week.

Rebecca Yae, NLIHC: The key issues we're seeing in the programs are: a. Programs that do not allow the use of self-attestation; b. Programs that do not offer direct-to-tenant assistance; and c. Programs that do not serve tenants who already receive federal rent subsidies. The Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Dashboard includes statistics about how many programs allow each of these things. Currently only 152 of 351 programs allow self-attestation, which is usually for establishing COVID hardship or income. The new Treasury guidelines advise offering direct-to-tenant assistance, but only 78 of the 351 programs we track in the database are currently offering that option. Some of the most frequently asked questions we get are around how other programs are incorporating key elements. The resource hub has examples of each of these elements, thanks to the generosity of all of the programs that have shared these details with us. This includes how programs are operationalizing prioritization, self-attestation, and other best practices.

Q: Is there any reporting on gender, race or ethnicity? And if not, when do you expect that?

A: There is now a requirement that programs collect that data, and I think programs will start releasing that later this month. I'm not really sure - I think we're all eager to find out what kind of data is going to be publicly available.

Q: With direct-to-tenant assistance, now that it's a requirement how long will jurisdictions have to implement that?

A: I'm not sure what the timeline is. I know a lot of programs are working hard to catch up to the guidance, and it usually takes a few weeks. The requirement is for programs that are using ERA2 from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and jurisdictions have just received those funds.

Q: Is there an office or entity where someone can report programs that are not adhering to the standards?

A: We would love to hear about that so it can help inform our efforts, and I would think Treasury would be interested in that as well. I'm not aware yet of a formal person or position to whom people would report that though.

Karlo NG, National Alliance for Safe Housing: HUD recently announced it will release 70,000 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs). So who qualifies? Individuals and families who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence; experiencing homelessness; at risk of experiencing homelessness; and recently homeless where the voucher would prevent the individual or family's homelessness. Oftentimes when folks think about gender-based violence they tend to think of a monolith, but there are a lot of nuances and variations in situations. It's important to keep this in mind because when we think about historic access to resources there are some differences. Domestic violence programs have been around longer, but sex trafficking programs are newer and haven't been connected with housing resources in the same way.

What is different about these EHVs? Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) with Continuums of Care (CoCs) and homeless services/victim service provider organizations as referral partners. Eligibility of the 4 categories is determined by the CoC or other referral partners. These relationships must be outlined in memorandums of understanding. Because CoCs are going to be deeply involved in these programs, PHAs have to take referrals from them. EHV can be used for people who have never been part of a voucher program, as well as people who are in the emergency transfer housing program for domestic violence survivors. With these EHV there will be a \$3,500 services fee per voucher to help participants access housing. Eligible uses are housing search assistance (required); security deposit/utility deposit/rental application; owner recruitment, outreach, incentive, and retention payments; and other miscellaneous uses like moving expenses and essential household items.

Other waivers and requirements

- PHAs must have a EHV waiting list separate from HCV waiting list.
- Restrictions on denials of assistance
- PHAs can establish higher payment standards.
- Flexibility for participants to verify income and immigration status/SSN
- Initial search term = 120 days (instead of 60 days)
- Initial lease term can be less than 12 months
- No portability residency requirement. Participants can port anytime during the first year of EHV assistance.
- EHV's do not renew after September 30, 2023



[Read more about the guidelines here.](#)

Other resources:

1. The NLIHC's [Emergency Rental Assistance](#) resource hub, dashboard and program table.