

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 21, 2021

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

From: Stefanie Knowlton
Communications Specialist, PSU-HRAC

Subject: Updates on COVID-19 and disaster response, housing, and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, June 14-20.

News¹

1. Millions of Americans are at risk of losing their housing when the federal eviction moratorium expires next week. [Slate](#) examines the crisis in a Q and A with a reporter with the Eviction Lab at Princeton University.
2. The Oregon State Legislature passed a bill that provides a 60-day pause on evictions for those awaiting assistance. ([OPB](#))
3. New York City plans to move about 8,000 people experiencing homelessness out of hotel rooms and back to shelters by the end of July. ([The New York Times](#))
4. Despite an increase in new housing construction in 2020, the nation continues to face shortages of starter homes, affordable housing, housing near jobs, and a widening racial wealth gap, according to “[The State of the Nation’s Housing](#)” report by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies. ([Planetizen](#))
5. The Biden-Harris Administration is pushing for a shift in U.S. housing policy to focus on supply constraints and the availability of affordable housing units. The plan includes tax credits to build new units and rehabilitate existing homes, \$94 billion in subsidies to build and preserve rental housing for lowest-income renters, \$40 billion to invest in public housing stock, and \$5 billion to reward jurisdictions that remove exclusionary zoning policies. ([Vox](#))
6. New York City is launching a program that will give youth experiencing homelessness direct cash payments of \$1,250 per month in a public-private partnership called the Trust Youth Initiative. ([City Lab](#))
7. A nonprofit in California is turning a motel into permanent supported housing and setting aside half of the units for those with mental illness as part of Orange County’s effort to build 2,700 units by 2025. ([LA Times](#))

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

National HoUSED Campaign Call for Universal, Stable, and Affordable Housing (June 14):

Senator Chris Van Hollen, (D-Maryland):

In addition to addressing the most pressing needs during this pandemic, we need to keep our eye on the overall challenge of making sure that we address the affordable housing crisis in America, which pre-existed this pandemic and will continue after the pandemic, if we don't do something about it. I do think we have an opportunity to do something about it with your engagement and leadership. And that is why I introduced legislation to provide families with young children with vouchers that allow them affordable housing in areas of greater opportunities. It's called the [Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act](#). I introduced it with Senator Young. It builds on a pilot program that we passed a number of years ago that included resources for programs to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, and it's proven so effective so quickly that we didn't think it was smart to wait any longer before we took this nationally.

The bill creates an additional 500,000 housing vouchers over five years for low-income, high-need families with young children. Pregnant women and families with a child under age six would qualify for these new vouchers if they have a history of homelessness or housing instability, live in an area of concentrated poverty, or are at risk of being pushed out of an opportunity area. This includes families who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking; families who are living in housing conditions that are dangerous or life threatening; and families who are living in units that are not accessible to a disabled family member. These vouchers are connected to wraparound services so voucher recipients will receive mobility related services that transfer, connecting them with transportation. That will help with respect to access to the workplace. And also, school and community-based support. Again, this has been proven effective in those places that have used it. And so we want to take this nationally with your help. This bill has been endorsed by the NAACP, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, The National Association of Social Workers, and many others. So I really think we have an opportunity to get this over the finish line. It is a bipartisan bill, and it meets an urgent need.

Kim Johnson, Housing Policy Analyst at NLIHC:

The Treasury's interim final rule on eligible uses for fiscal recovery funds is pretty broad, which gives states and localities a lot of flexibility in how they can use the funds, but also necessitates clarity for communities looking to use those funds in a specific way. With the help of input from our state and local advocates, we've been drafting a common letter to the Treasury requesting needed clarity for communities looking to use state and local fiscal recovery funds for affordable housing development. So first, we request the Treasury to define development of affordable housing as the construction, preservation, rehabilitation, or operation of housing affordable to very low income households, those earning less than 50% of area median income, and that they ensure the longest possible affordability period. We also encourage the Treasury to require state and local governments to set aside a significant share of fiscal recovery funds used for affordable housing to be targeted to serve extremely low income renters, and to ensure that at least 10% of any housing

built with federal support is accessible to people with physical disabilities and accessible to people with sensory disabilities. The Treasury should also explicitly state that recovery funds may be used to support operating expenses in permanent supportive housing, and affordable housing developments. Expanding eligible uses of fiscal recovery funds to include operating expenses can help maintain long-term housing stability among the lowest income households.

Other resources:

1. A [new report](#) from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University shows that wealthy households are “snapping up the limited supply of homes for sale, pushing up prices and further excluding less affluent buyers” At the same time, millions of households are on the brink of eviction or foreclosure, which is widening racial inequalities around ownership, access and wealth.
2. A [new IRS tool](#) makes it easier for people experiencing homelessness to access stimulus checks. It is designed to help eligible individuals and families who don’t normally file income tax returns claim the new monthly Child Tax Credits and claim any missed stimulus payments.
3. The National Alliance to End Homelessness created a [data visualization](#) that highlights the evidence in support of housing first.