

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 20, 2020

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

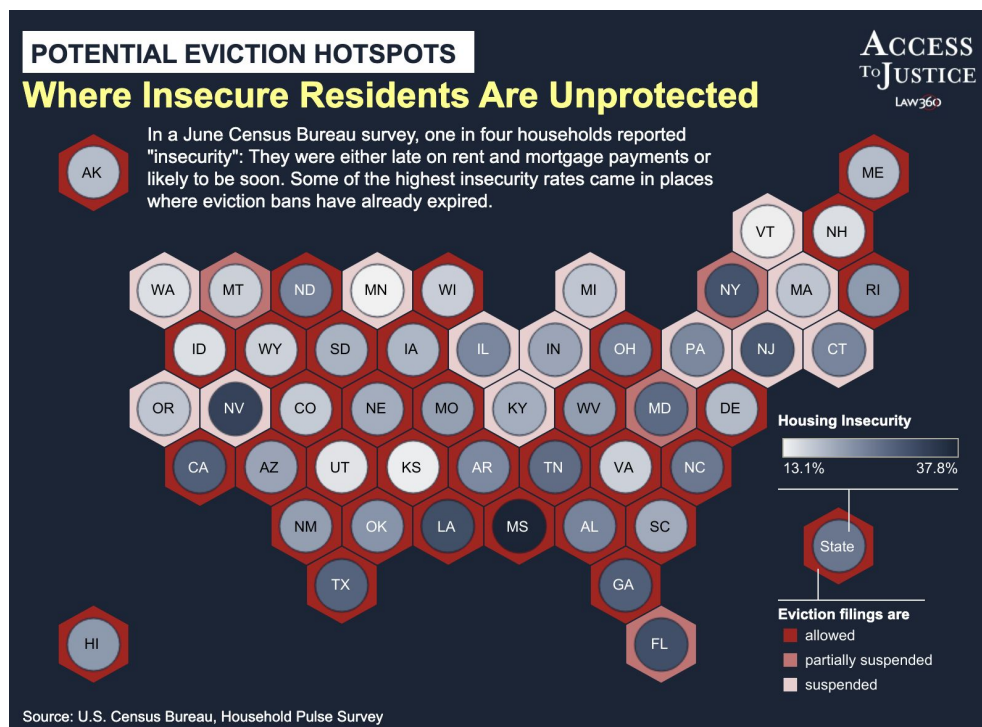
From: Lauren E. M. Everett
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Subject: Updates on COVID-19 response, housing, and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, July 13 - 19

News

1. NPR's Weekend Edition spotlighted the story of a houseless man who received care in a hotel for two weeks from a [Phoenix-based nonprofit](#) as he battled coronavirus.
2. [Cleveland's](#) hotel program for unsheltered people experiencing homelessness (versus shelter residents) began when a service provider took the risk of renting 25 rooms for vulnerable individuals, without guaranteed funding. Now the county has stepped up to pay for the costs of the rooms and staffing through the end of October.
3. Service providers in [Seattle](#) are debating what to do when funding for the city's hotel program runs out at the end of August. Returning clients to congregate shelters without extensive COVID precautions is more expensive than hotel rooms and is not considered a viable option. The Downtown Emergency Service Center hopes to purchase three motels to create transitional shelter for 383 people.
4. The [L.A. Homeless Services Authority](#) is launching an ambitious new project called the [COVID-19 Recovery Plan](#) that aims to rapidly house 15,000 people and reduce inflow into homelessness. This housing would act as a bridge between homelessness and permanent housing. It will be funded using about \$300 million, mostly from the CARES Act, and \$200 million in city resources, leaving a \$300 million funding gap. Governor Newsom announced Thursday that \$600 million in funding is now available for local governments through [Project Homekey](#). Applications will be accepted starting July 22.
5. In [Arizona](#), community advocates worry that a major increase in homelessness is in the state's near future as the eviction moratorium ends July 22.
6. As [Denver](#) prepares its first sanctioned campsite for unhoused residents, lawyers and advocates discuss the difference between sanctioned and unsanctioned camping. Meanwhile, [families](#) experiencing homelessness are struggling to find shelter and services. [Colorado](#) landlords have filed over 800 eviction cases since June 1, and homeless shelter guest numbers have surged to levels higher than the coldest night in February.
7. In [Texas](#), one of the current coronavirus hotspots, 2,300 evictions were filed in Harris County (Houston) alone during the month of June.

8. The Park and Recreation Board in [Minneapolis](#) voted to limit the size of tent encampments that have coalesced in local parks citing concerns about violence toward both residents and volunteers. Encampments will now be limited to 25 tents in 20 parks.
9. [New York City's](#) Office of Emergency Management is preparing for a second wave of COVID and has put out a contract proposal for an operator to run the hotel program. The city could spend up to \$100 million on hotels and is seeking full reimbursement from FEMA. CBS New York reports that New Yorkers are noticing [an increase in unsheltered homelessness](#).
10. [San Diego's](#) Regional Task Force on the Homeless will vote on creating a task force to address the root causes of Black homelessness in the city. Los Angeles assembled a similar initiative two years ago.
11. In [Oregon, Portland](#) City Council is considering a \$144 million plan to allocate federal COVID relief dollars. The proposal includes \$19 million to the Joint Office of Homelessness Services, where it will be distributed across several programs, including outreach, expanded food access, and two motel programs. It also includes \$15 million in rent assistance.
12. In [Barcelona](#), Catalonia (Spain), the city government is proposing an innovative approach to the shortage of affordable rental housing combined with the issue of empty investment properties: take public possession of the vacant apartments if the landlord cannot find a tenant within the next month and compensate them at half the market value.
13. Law 360 reports on the [eviction and rent debt crisis](#) unfolding across the country as moratoriums expire.



(Law 360)

National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) weekly call and updates (July 13)

- **Diane Yentel (NLIHC):** Federal eviction moratoriums on properties with federally backed mortgages expire in 11 days (July 25), and expanded unemployment insurance (extra \$600 a week) expires at the end of July 31. Already, 29 governors have allowed state eviction moratoriums to expire, and landlords have started to evict. There are about 150 new rental assistance programs around that country that are preventing some evictions. However, the demand is overwhelming and many of these programs are shutting down immediately after resources are allocated. Every day of inaction is putting more low-income renters in immediate danger of losing their housing. We are running out of time. The Senate returns to DC next week and will have 10 working days before leaving for another recess. After this next emergency spending bill, there won't be anything else coming up until maybe mid-November. By then there will be millions of households that have been evicted. If your Congressperson has not advocated for this yet, put the pressure on *publicly*.
- **Hunter Kurtz (Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing, HUD):** HUD has released their first ever waiver notice over a week ago. We're requiring Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to post notice of what waivers they're using. We began releasing some more Indian CDBG funding (\$100 million) on a rolling basis. We've also put out [a toolkit](#) on how PHAs can work with residents on payment plans and other eviction prevention measures. We were unable to expand the moratorium because that requires an act of Congress, but we hope this toolkit will assist people. We can't require PHAs to mandate a repayment agreement, which is why we put together the toolkit. Diane: Can't you mandate income recertification? Hunter: We'll look into it. Diane: Is Secretary Carson urging Congress to extend the moratorium? Hunter: I'm not sure that's something we've taken a stance on.
- **Sasha Wisotsky Kergan (Data and Research Unit Chief of Housing Policy, CA Department of Housing and Community Development):** We had already been addressing the state's homelessness crises as a top priority before the pandemic began. Our response includes Project Roomkey, which provided over 15,000 units of non-congregate shelter in over 50 counties. Our next step is Project Homekey, which allocates \$550 million in COVID_19 relief and \$50 million of general fund allocation. The budget calls out these funds as grants to local governments. It also outlines several allowable uses: acquisition of hotels etc., master leasing of properties, acquisition of other sites and assets, conversion from non-residential to residential, relocation costs, and more.

As a result of this budget authorization, we're drafting a Notice of Funding Availability to be released next month for local applicants, which is based on a survey of local agencies and service providers. The program's success and rapid timeline requires that the department offer support on technical issues. Dec 30, 2020 is the deadline for spending the federal

COVID relief funds. The \$50 million of general expenditure has a two year deadline (June 2022). What are some of the most important lessons learned from project Roomkey? Partnerships between different agencies and organizations are key, and the department has been trying to provide templates and other short cuts. One of the successes is being able to bring people inside so quickly.

- **Mark Calabria (Director, Federal Housing Finance Agency):** The agency has been focused on stabilizing renters and homeowners in their homes during the pandemic. They've done a lot on the homeowner side, but he's going to focus more on renters rights now. FHFA only covers federal guaranteed mortgages (about 40% of the multifamily market). We don't have a direct relationship with the tenant, nor do Fannie and Freddie, so we're multiple levels removed from renters. But we think it was important early in the crisis to assist renters as a condition of owners accessing forbearance. We anticipated that this relief would help both parties, and to make sure the owner was passing on the benefit, one of the conditions of the forbearance was to also suspend evictions. We don't have the authority to impose additional restrictions on property owners. This eviction moratorium expires July 25. If the borrower is in forbearance and is illegally evicting, that is a violation of the loan agreement so we have some pressure we can apply. Our enforcement tools are really what's in the loan document so the worst we can do is find the loan in breach.

Diane: How do tenants know if they qualify for this? Mark: [The look up tool](#) should be able to tell you that. The property owner has the responsibility to tell the tenant. Diane: I don't think you can tell if the owner has requested forbearance. So maybe the FHFA needs to contact the tenant and notify them or put that in the tool.

- **Christine Hess (ED, Nevada Housing Coalition):** Nevada has had some of the highest unemployment rates during April and May. The state still has an eviction moratorium in place until Sept 1. The governor designated \$30 million for rental assistance from CV relief funds. The Nevada Housing Council (NHC) isn't a decision maker so their role has been as a connector. They collected and distributed information in a timely manner to their active partners; they conducted their own research; they leveraged a significant amount of information from the NLIHC; and they hosted their own statewide calls and webinars to share information. They're part of the Clark County Recovery Team (LV), which designated \$30 million of their own federal COVID relief for rental assistance. They also wrote a letter to the governor recommending \$50 million of COVID relief for housing assistance (\$30 million ultimately was allocated).
- **Alison McIntosh (Policy and Communications Director, Neighborhood Partnerships, Oregon Housing Coalition):** The legislature extended the eviction moratorium until the end of Sept. The moratorium prevents the filing and delivering of evictions, as well as a suspension of late fees. There's general funds, federal funds, and CDBG for rental assistance. Multnomah County mirrored the moratorium and also implemented a six month repayment plan. They asked the legislature to extend that to the whole state, and they did. This was

accomplished with a wide coalition of advocates. There's also a prohibition on landlords reporting late rent to credit bureaus. Having renters speak directly to legislators was key. The delay in unemployment benefits helped make the case.

NAEH 2020 Nationwide Town Hall on Ending Homelessness (July 15)

NAEH's [Framework for an equitable response](#):

1. Advance racial justice and equity
2. Help people with highest needs first. Don't use funding for eviction prevention, use it to help people experiencing homelessness
3. Grow partnerships with a broad range of organizations and systems
4. Get people into housing
5. Act quickly

Elected officials are important to enacting solutions for these issues so register your clients to vote and have a strategy to assist them in accessing voting.

The [Racial Equity Network](#) (REN) - assists CoCs in centering racial equity in their work. NAEH is also working on these things within their organization.

Dr. Va Lecia Adams Kellum (St. Joseph's, Los Angeles)

- Workers in the service providers sector have really stepped up during the pandemic.
- George Floyd's murder inspired us to stand up and speak out and put ourselves at the forefront of this crisis.
- We are a sector that stands at the right side of history. Our clients are relying on us to speak up about the injustices that have put them in the position they are in.

Lucius Couloute (Professor of Sociology, Suffolk University)

- Formerly incarcerated people are 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general population.
- Public housing authorities have traditionally discriminated against this population.
- This population lives in perpetual precarity. They simply want access to opportunities and the resources that would enable them to live flourishing lives.
- Three policy moves to address this prison-to-homelessness pipeline:
 - End over-policing
 - 'Ban the box' on housing applications. Criminal history is not a good proxy for tenant screening
 - Implement automatic criminal record expungement procedures

Amanda Andere (CEO, Funders Together to End Homelessness)

- Their organization steers philanthropy towards homelessness solutions and addressing structural inequities.
- The COVID disparities are rooted in structural racism and pre-existing inequities.
- Black people, Indigenous people and youth are often left out of the recovery efforts, and philanthropy needs to address this.
- We had to think differently about the way we traditionally fund and make sure people with lived experience are at the table.
- Philanthropy has supported real-time evaluations so communities can pivot and course correct.
- The question for all of us who are gatekeepers is how will you collaborate with POC and people with lived experience to share power?

Bobby Watts, CEO, National Health Care for the Homeless Council

- There's a great challenge in meeting the level of hygiene needed for preventing COVID while facing the reality of being houseless.
- Service providers and frontline workers have been really innovative in adapting to the situation.
- It's essential to speak truth to power and continue to speak up to elected officials about the urgency of funding and policy.

Other resources:

1. NLIHC's new report, [Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing](#).
2. HUD's [Eviction Prevention and Stability Toolkit](#)
3. [ESG-CV funding guidance](#) to help people experiencing homelessness first.
4. [Guidelines](#) for community-based organizations during COVID-19.