

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** July 27, 2020

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

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

**Subject:** Updates on COVID-19 response, housing, and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, July 20 - 26

### News

1. The National Housing Law Project's [Stopping COVID-19 Evictions Survey](#) of 100 legal aid and civil rights organizations found that 91% of respondents reported illegal evictions, and that 88% are concerned about remote hearing processes.
2. The Southwest Institute for Research on Women released a new report on homelessness forecasts and policy recommendations in [Arizona](#) during the pandemic.
3. New research in the Journal of Housing Economics examines the correlation between [landlord-tenant policies and forced mobility](#). Their report found that policies around late fees, non retaliation, and self help (such as the option to deduct the cost of repairs from the rent) were associated with decreased mobility rates.
4. [Santa Barbara County](#), CA is making the shift from moving houseless people into hotels to placement in permanent housing. They're also working on a homelessness prevention strategy using federal coronavirus aid.
5. One of [Minneapolis'](#) Powderhorn Park encampments was cleared of its last remaining residents Monday, and about 20 people (both residents and activists) who refused to leave were arrested. The encampment had grown substantially after the Park Board voted on June 17 to allow people to camp in city parks.
6. [Miami-Dade County](#), FL is providing hundreds of free rooms for people who need to self-isolate for short periods. The roughly 500 rooms are available to people awaiting test results (housed and unhoused), health care workers, and first responders, and are accessible by calling a hotline.
7. Attorneys representing five houseless individuals and their families filed suit against the city and county of [San Diego](#), CA for failing to provide hotel rooms to high-risk people during the pandemic. Though the city has a hotel program, the parties in the suit say they have been denied access despite meeting the criteria, and directed to the 1,500 bed Convention Center shelter.
8. [San Francisco](#) Mayor London Breed presented a plan on Tuesday to address homelessness in the city over the next two years. The Homelessness Recovery Plan

aims to find shelter or housing for 6,000 people, including 4,500 placements in permanent supportive housing. This plan will rely on general fund dollars, federal and state funding, and philanthropic contributions. Meanwhile, levels of COVID infections are disproportionately high among the [Mission](#) neighborhood's Latino population, likely due to doubling up.

9. In [Los Angeles County](#), leaders voted to direct more than \$111 million of federal coronavirus-relief funds toward their plan to house 15,000 people experiencing homelessness. The total cost of the plan is \$800 million, and will draw funding from a number of sources. *SFGate* chronicles how [Project Room Key](#) has impacted the wellbeing of one Los Angeles man. *The Los Angeles Times* reports on how the pandemic is deepening the [affordable housing crisis for Black households](#).
10. This report in the *Montana Free Press* chronicles the difficulty service providers face in [accessing federal funding](#) to provide adequate care to people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.
11. As about half of [New York City](#)'s jail inmates have been released due to COVID-related reasons, advocates fear they will exit directly into homelessness. They're calling in the New York City Housing Authority to change its policies on banning recently arrested people from even visiting public housing.

## National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) weekly call and updates (July 20)

**Diane Yentel:** The wave of evictions has already begun and Congress needs to act. Moratoriums are expiring rapidly. Already, 29 governors have lifted their moratoriums, and now we're seeing an increase in cases in COVID-19 hotspots areas. In Houston courts are holding over 2,000 hearings via Zoom. Columbus is using their convention center as an eviction center. In Denver they're planning campsites for the increase in homelessness. Many states are having to shut down their program for rent relief within hours of opening. This is happening even with the expanded unemployment insurance benefits. These outcomes are completely predictable and preventable. Congress needs to enact a uniform moratorium for the duration, as well as at least \$100 billion in aid. The House passed these essential protections twice, but McConnell has refused to take up any of these bills in the Senate. The GOP bill that will be introduced this week will almost certainly not include assistance for renters and homelessness.

**Ron Wyden, Oregon Senator:** The challenge is that millions of people are walking on an economic tightrope. This includes food, medical, and rent. When there's an emergency they fall off the tightrope. I wrote the expanded EDD package (\$600 extra per week). The ball is now in McConnell's court. He is going to be the key GOP decision maker on this. Now we have the sense he wants a substantially smaller package. I don't get the feeling that he understands the challenge of having a dependable safety net. Or perhaps he understands it and is not interested. Political change does not start in DC and trickle down. It's usually from the grassroots up. People are using that extra unemployment to pay for essentials, not luxury items.

It would be a moral abomination to start throwing people out of their homes right now. Being at home is a lynchpin to defeating the virus. Here are the next steps: Passing 1. [The Emergency Rental Assistance and Market Stabilization Act](#), 2. the housing assistance fund (mortgages) 3. [Protecting Renters from Evictions and Fees Act](#), 4. [Public Health and Emergency Shelter Act](#), 5. Legislation that Senator Schumer and I are working on, that would tie benefits to economic conditions on the ground, e.g. the level of unemployment would determine if the aid continues.

**Diane:** We have questions about frustration around GOP legislators not taking action, and the eviction moratoriums ending soon, people not being able to pay, etc. What can we do to pressure Congress to act?

**Ron:** Waiting until the last minute did not happen by accident. This is McConnell trying to run the clock out. If you're in a swing state, put pressure on your legislature to put pressure on him. Targets: Collins (ME), Crapo (ID), Portman (OH), Young (IN), McSally (AZ), Romney (UT), Tillis (NC), Gardner (CO).

**Diane:** What are the prospects of us being successful? What are you hearing from the GOP and what are the compelling arguments to convince them?

**Ron:** I would make the case that these protections can be really life or death. These are funds to keep a roof over someone's head, buy food, and maintain health during a pandemic. Make the case that not having shelter puts people in danger, not having access to nutritious food stunts childrens' growth, etc. It's also important to have folks at home invite Senators to see how these programs work. For example, people lined up in their cars around the block for food. This is a time to go to the grassroots. Get them to the point where they can't make a case against these acts.

**Marc Dones, ED, National Innovation Service:** We've developed [an equity tool](#) with community feedback to break apart decision making into three buckets. The tool is meant to be used by nonprofits to map their own strategy and operations onto the aspects of the tool. We talk about developing RFPs equitably, communications, hiring, etc. We're working on securing additional funds, and at the same time to re-think some of our approaches. Take this opportunity to assess how you can lift marginalized voices to the forefront in your community. You have to sit back and look at who's at the table. So I took a look at my team and identified some of the missing pieces. You also have to make sure you're prepared to receive feedback. When someone tells you things aren't working, you need to be able to listen without responding with an explanation. Try to build relationships with people rather than doing a "one-off" for feedback. Also, pay people for their time, any time you're reaching out to someone who knows something you don't. That's a skill.

**John Pollack, Public Justice Center:**

[The Eviction Prediction Tool](#) was developed by Stout, who did the right to counsel cost/benefit reports in NYC, Philly and LA. The number of rent-unstable tenant households at risk of

eviction is 16 million households, with an estimated 11 million eviction filings in the next two months. The tool also illustrates racial disparities in confidence of the ability to pay rent in the future. You can also narrow it down to a state, but not county and city level data as the Census data used does not disaggregate it that way. Black/Latino people are two times as likely to be renters and pay a higher percentage of their income for rent. Stout also created a list of [Eviction Right to Counsel Resources](#).

**Diane:** Are there any data on non-court-mandated evictions?

**John:** This data is based on rent burden data, and on a Census survey about confidence in ability to pay rent. The non-court-mandated evictions are difficult to track. We can barely track court data. I don't think anyone has data on informal evictions that don't go through the court system. (\*[Anti-Eviction Mapping Project](#) is collecting stories and information about landlord-tenant communications and experiences during COVID. Please visit their website to submit your story)

**Karen Koch, ED, Florida Supportive Housing Coalition:** CARES Act Funding was given to a statewide nonprofit, Florida housing Finance Corporation. \$250m of funding. It was put into \$120m for rental assistance from 120% AMI and \$120m for Florida Housing Finance Corporation for their affordable housing portfolio. The eviction moratorium will expire. \$120m will go directly to the counties, who will direct it to the properties. There's no prediction for how fast the funding will be used, but probably very quickly. Any developers who use this financing must not evict people up to January. They also have to agree to conditions like not charging late fees. Another thing we've been looking into is PSH. FHFC set aside \$10m of the funding to cover the costs of these small PSH programs.

**Greg Payne, Maine Affordable Housing Coalition:** We weren't getting a full picture of the problem tenants were facing, so last month we launched a new project where we're conducting interviews with households who rely on earned income, at least partially. We're interviewing each family once a month for a year. We interviewed 31 renter households in June, with a goal of 70 in July. We found that 74% of households lost earned income, but all but 1 of the households managed to pay rent using savings, EDD, loans, etc. 42% said they were skipping other bills in order to pay rent. There was a lot of anxiety about being able to pay in the future. Families are hit particularly hard because there's a need for childcare that can't be met if people go back to work and kids aren't in school. Seniors were somewhat financially secure due to Social Security, but were socially isolated and afraid of getting sick. The press has really responded to this survey and there has been a lot of media coverage.

**Sarah, NLIHC:** GOP opposes the \$600 extension because they think it discourages people from returning to work, so they will likely propose something closer to a few hundred dollars. They also want to make sure funds don't go to undocumented people. It probably won't include any local relief, but more guidance on the CARES Act. The GOP will likely not include emergency rental assistance in their proposal. When that proposal comes out, if it does not

include it it's really important to lobby your representatives through various platforms. There are still five Senate Democrats who have not signed on to support the bill, not to mention the GOP folks.

### Other resources

1. NLIHC released a report on [state and local rental assistance programs](#).
2. NLIHC's [eviction tracker](#).