

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 13, 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 6 - 12.

News

1. Advocates in the [Bay Area \(CA\)](#) worry that Project Roomkey is only serving a fraction of the houseless population. Currently about 85% of the hotel rooms secured through the program statewide are occupied, with the rest reserved for a surge of COVID-positive cases. [San Francisco](#) has pledged to move 200 people out of hotels and into housing by the end of this year. They will use the city's Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool. Meanwhile, officials in [El Dorado County](#) (Lake Tahoe) feel Project Roomkey has been a success, and be the foundation for an ongoing strategy for addressing homelessness.
2. [Maryland](#) faces an impending double crisis of the eviction moratorium expiring July 25 and funding for hotels ending. A recent survey also revealed unsafe conditions in homeless shelters.
3. In [New York City](#), housing advocates are concerned that the state's response to helping renters who have lost income is inadequate. Governor Cuomo recently authorized \$100 million in federal rent relief, which is just a fraction of the estimated [\\$743 million](#) monthly amount needed. The death rate from the virus is [61% higher for unhoused](#) New Yorkers.
4. The House Appropriations Subcommittee, which oversees funding for HUD's affordable housing and community development programs, voted to approve [a spending bill that represents a significant increase in funding](#) for housing programs that serve low-income households and communities. The House full committee may vote on the bill as soon as next week.
5. The House passed the ["Emergency Housing Protections and Relief Act of 2020,"](#) which proposes allocating almost \$200 billion in additional funding for housing and homelessness programs. The Senate is opposed to any additional COVID relief after the passage of the HEROES Act, and will not take up any legislation until late July.
6. [Vermont](#) is being lauded by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) for its response to COVID and people experiencing homelessness. State officials loosened requirements for motel and hotel stays to enable essentially the entire houseless population (1,110 individuals as of the 2020 Point In Time Count) to access shelter.

7. Housing advocates have been seeing a disturbing trend in [tenant harassment](#) directed toward undocumented immigrants who cannot pay their rent.
8. Riverside County ([Palm Springs, CA](#)) is looking to purchase a Palm Springs hotel for use as a permanent emergency shelter, using CARES Act funding. It will include wrap around services.
9. Houseless residents in [Durham, NC](#) face an impending crisis, as the hotel program expired July 9 and new shelter guidelines around social distancing have reduced capacity.
10. In [Nashville](#), the city government is partnering with community organizations to provide hotel vouchers and rent assistance to Latino immigrant communities that have been hit particularly hard by COVID. Nearly 30% of Nashvillians who tested positive for the virus are Latino, while that group makes up only 10% of the population. This is especially intended to target individuals who need to self-isolate, but have living situations such as multigenerational households that make that difficult. The program will be funded through the CARES Act.
11. Next City lays out the argument for the urgency of a universal, long-term [federal eviction moratorium and rental assistance](#).
12. This in-depth report illustrates [racial disparities](#) in COVID rates. Specifically, Latino and Black Americans are nearly three times as likely to become infected, and twice as likely to die from the virus as white Americans.

National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) Weekly Call (Monday, July 6) and Weekly Updates

- **Eric Hufnagel, ED, Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness:** Michigan received much less funding in the second round of ESG COVID funding. They're been looking at accessing funding for Rapid Rehousing (RRH), staffing agencies, and better addressing the ongoing impact of the virus in general. The Coalition's renter relief program is developed to incorporate a framework that hasn't been utilized in the past. To utilize the funds, each agency must have an eviction prevention program with legal aid and mediation services. The eviction diversion process will include conditional dismissal of cases. The program is for people who will have some rent debt. The executive order prohibits the removal of a renter from their home, and that's been extended but that can't be extended indefinitely.

This program is optional for landlords and lenders. They are encouraged to take advantage of this housing debt remedy rather than pursuing eviction or foreclosure. The guarantee is up to 90% of the debt owed, so they'll be making a sacrifice in not evicting, but will at least get some money. This is only for COVID housing debt: non-COVID housing debt must be paid by the resident. Related debt must be paid over a course of 12 months (anything not covered by this program). Plaintiffs must forgive late fees, etc. One half of the funds must be for households making less than 50% AMI. The idea is getting landlords to buy into it without mandating it. What if landlords turn down the deal? There's no way of guaranteeing

participation, but they're hoping that the participation of courts, service providers etc. will be persuasive in getting landlords to participate.

- **Jayne Johnson, Homebuyer Education Initiative Specialist, Tennessee Housing Development Agency:** The homebuyer education program is housed under their single family homeownership program. They do direct housing counseling specific to foreclosure. During COVID they've noticed that everything that's happening is different than what they initially thought. People are still buying homes. As for foreclosures, they're bracing for when the moratoriums lift. Currently the rates are low in Tennessee. There have been 1,414 forbearances over this time. Many of the forbearances that have been approved are not delinquent. In Nashville especially there are a lot of out-of-work service industry employees. They're expecting \$35-45 million to help with rapid rehousing, with \$11 million confirmed. Rental evictions are also a concern. The moratoriums have been extended, but that won't last. They're focusing on making sure housing counselors are prepared for an increase in call volume, and that they're familiar with the local available resources.
- **Miranda Darden-Willems, ED, Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition:** There is \$30 million in CDBG coronavirus funding coming to the state to support rental assistance programs. \$10 million of that is for eviction prevention. The state is not equipped to do a state-run rental assistance program, so they're working with the jurisdictions. They're also working with property managers so they can apply for their entire portfolios for all of the delinquencies. This is for tax credit properties, rentals owned by landlords who participate in the federal low-income housing tax credit program. The state would reimburse the property managers in this case. The state has 40,000 tax-credit units. There's already \$30 million in local rental assistance, so combined it should be about \$60 million. In Baltimore they're using their city housing trust fund, CDBG, and other funding. Money will be disbursed in August. If they spend the whole \$10 million for eviction prevention quickly, they hope to get more in the future.
- **Meghan Maury, Policy Director, National LGBTQ Task Force:** There is a [new HUD rule](#) about transgender clients that would allow providers to discriminate against trans and non-gender conforming individuals. HUD sent the rule to the Congress' authorizing committees to review it. They just announced in a press release that a rollback of the rule is on its way. It's a terrible rule, and it's also confusing because it changes the way HUD's rules interact with other rules. The Supreme Court just ruled that sex discrimination refers to sexual orientation and gender identity, so there will probably be additional issues with this rule change related to that. **Over 40% of young people experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ, trans or non-gender conforming.** In general, trans people are disproportionately represented in the homeless population, and are likely to increase. When the rule is released, if you're a service provider make sure you make it clear that this population is still welcome. Speak out locally. There's a tool kit for organizations to use. Writing a public comment on the rule is also important.

- Deborah Thrope, Deputy Director, National Housing Law Project:** HUD published an [eviction prevention and housing stability resource](#) early this month. There's a PSA brochure, a flyer for voucher landlords, repayment agreement guidance, and a sample COVID-19 resident needs assessment survey. The PHA (Public Housing Authority) brochure encourages housing authorities to be proactive in identifying tenants in need. There's a lot of helpful information about what PHA's can do when the eviction moratorium expires. There is a lot of guidance on eviction prevention funds. It advises owners to allow repayments, and talks about CARES funds. It also advises HAs to review their recertification guidelines to account for reduced incomes by doing recertifications retroactively. There are great best practices listed here about this. The tenant brochure is comprehensive. There's some good language around protections for survivors of domestic violence. However it's not written at the most accessible reading level, and [their org \(NHLP\) has a good one](#) that covers that topic. The repayment agreement guidance encourages private landlords who take vouchers to make repayment arrangements. What is notably absent is that there's a mortgage forbearance extension for properties with subsidized tenants. Some language around repayment agreements is missing around recertifying the tenants income so they're facing the correct amount of arrearages, based on current income.
- NLIHC** has a database of local rental assistance programs, and here is a break down:

Rental Assistance Created or Expanded in Response to COVID-19			
Programs Identified		Eligibility Requirements	
Total	151	Income is 60% AMI or below	36%
State-level	40	Income is 80% AMI or below	84%
Local-level	111	Demonstrated COVID hardship	83%
Open programs	107	Landlord-related requirements	63%
Closed programs	44		
Distribution Method		Duration of Assistance	
First-Come First-Served	55	Three months or less	85%
Lottery	19	Six months or less	97%
		Source of Funding	
		Non-CARES Act	64%
		CARES Act	50%

NLIHC Live Conversation: How a housing and homelessness response to COVID-19 must center racial equity, address systemic inequities & discrimination

Nikole Hannah-Jones is a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter covering racial injustice for The New York Times Magazine and creator of the landmark 1619 Project.

Marla Newman:

Black Americans represent 13% of the general population, 40% of people experiencing homelessness and more than 50% homeless families with children.

Nikole Hannah-Jones:

When you decide that you want to purchase a home, the agent always says ‘location, location, location.’ The neighborhood you buy into is crucial. Whether that neighborhood offers opportunities, resources, good schools—that’s what real estate agents are selling you. You see that people who have choices will prioritize neighborhoods. The same way they can benefit you, they can also have the opposite effect. So location, in a country where we have built infrastructure around maintaining social hierarchy—location is more important than the actual structure.

Marla:

You noted all the most segregated cities are northern. After the great migration, you don’t have to put segregation law on the books if you enforce it through land allocation.

Nikole:

We think of the South as being racist, though to be clear slavery occurred in all of the colonies. Throughout most of US history, 98-99% of Black people lived in the south, so Jim Crow emerged there to maintain a social order. Northerners never had to do that, because there weren’t as many Black people. They still created a legal architecture, whether they made it illegal for Black people to move there or be charged a fee. With the Great Migration this began to change. It went from nearly all Black people in the South to half moving to the North. Then the facade of a racially equal society went away, as ghettos and other means of enforcing segregation emerged. Local officials would pick up a city map and determine where Black people could live. Then real estate agents and homeowners participated with racial covenants. Then housing became the mechanism of social control. You don’t have to pass segregation laws if you simply order people in space through these tactics, specifically housing.

After the end of Jim Crow in the South, you saw a lot of integration because they didn’t have segregation by housing, only through law. Whereas in the North, it was maintained through redlining etc. Fair Housing law has never really been adequately enforced. A lot of the white support for civil rights law ended when you extended it to housing. Fair Housing was one of the most filibustered laws ever. It wasn’t until Dr. King was assassinated that it was able to be passed.

He had been pushing for it, and it was really hard to get white popular support for it. It was really only possible after the assassination and nationwide uprisings. There's opposition to siting low-income housing into white neighborhoods, which means that housing goes into already segregated and low-income neighborhoods. So the history of not wanting to enforce Fair Housing goes back to the understanding that housing is the linchpin of opportunity.

Marla:

Ben Carson calls efforts to change neighborhood composition "social engineering"

Nikole:

Redlining is also social engineering. The belief that Black people want to live in majority-Black neighborhoods is not true. St. Louis had a 50% law, stating that either group that was in the minority (Black or white) had to move. Redlining denied renovation capital and loans, so white people moved out because of redlining. Which is to say, this was created through government policy and must be undone in the same way.

Marla:

How do we overcome a white desire for segregation?

Nikole:

Just to be clear, I don't think most white people want 1950s style segregation. Research shows a comfort level of 10% Black, but when it gets up to 30% white people want to leave the neighborhood. The tolerance for poor Black people in particular is almost nonexistent. So the question is how do you undo this system when white people who say they are on your side don't really want true integration. The tolerance for Asians and Latinos is much higher than for Black people. In a country that is mostly run by white people, Black people's success is dependent on convincing white people to change the system. I don't know how to change this, and I think it's unfair to ask Black people how to get white people to do what they need to do.

Marla:

In your reparations article you noted the tremendous wealth gap...

Nikole:

It's a wealth and income gap, and the wealth gap is more significant. Black households have 10 cents of wealth for every \$1 that white Americans have. As we know, the biggest generator of wealth is housing. When the federal government got into the business of home loans, it was implemented in a time of legal and institutionalized racism, and 98% of federally insured loans went to white people. Black people had to do contract leasing or other predatory lending products. The redlining maps also artificially inflated values in white areas, and deflated values in Black areas. To this day that discrepancy persists. So if you're Black and you buy a house, it's worth less and you're charged more to service the loan. What this means is that Black households had no real way to accumulate wealth over time. Black Americans have the lowest homeownership rate. What homeownership means now in this crisis is if your paycheck runs out, you can go into your savings

or take out a loan on your home. One out of four Black people have missed at least one house payment since the crisis began.

With homelessness, we tend to think people did something to deserve being in that position. But if you're Black and lose your job, you can be homeless in two months, because you have no safety net whatsoever. This comes from hundreds of years of slavery and then legal discrimination. In this country we have a pathological denial about this history and the depth of the Black struggle. A white person with a high school degree has more wealth than a Black person with a graduate degree. It's about generational wealth, not working hard. The only way you can address the theft of a generation's ability to build wealth is by transferring it to those communities.

When I argue for reparations I'm not saying people should pull out their checkbooks. What I'm saying is that it's a societal debt. What it would look like is a targeted investment into segregated and under resourced Black communities and schools. It would also be a commitment to actually enforce civil rights laws. Also, individual cash payments. There's an argument that it should be scholarships, but data shows that college degrees don't close the wealth gap.

Regarding Trump, we default to our foundation, which is maintaining a racial hierarchy. Trump can't run on the economy anymore, so he defaults to racism because that's been at our core since our founding. We haven't learned. In my work, and the 1619 project, we're trying to argue that lots of Americans are hurt by these policies, including numerically more white Americans than Black Americans. They are willing to hurt themselves and their own interest to hurt Black Americans. The majority of white people are willing to oppose a policy if they think it's going to help Black people.

We need to advocate to Congress to help out our fellow Americans. I hope we will come to understand after all these years that relying on corporations to solve our problems was always false. We need a strong government in a time like this. Homeownership hasn't been as good of an investment for us (Black people) as it has been for white Americans. When I'm talking about reparations, take some time to think about the opposition to just giving Black people cash. Housing investments are great, but can't supersede a transfer of wealth.

Other Resources

1. HUD published its [Worst Case Housing Needs: 2019 Report to Congress](#), which finds that 7.7 million very low-income unsubsidized renter households spend over half their income on housing, live in severely inadequate housing, or both.
2. The United States Government Accountability Office issued [a report on rental housing](#) that details an increase in rental households, and a decline in affordability.
3. NLIHC's [Rental Assistance Is Needed to Keep Families Stably Housed](#) fact sheet.
4. A new report from UCLA's Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy lays out a comprehensive framework for [converting hotels and motels into social housing](#), including, when applicable, using eminent domain.

5. National Health Care for the Homeless Council's guide to [Strategies for Proactive Universal Testing](#).