

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 4th, 2020

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

From: Lauren E. M. Everett
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Subject: Updates on COVID-19 response and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, April 27th - May 3rd

National Low Income Housing Coalition weekly call (Monday, 4/27)

- Mark Calabria of the Federal Housing Finance Agency provided some [resources for renters](#) to find out whether their homes are eligible for a national eviction moratorium and mortgage forbearance under the CARES Act. They are working on a tool where residents of single-family homes can look up this information. Currently the available tool does not include properties with less than four dwellings.
- Keith Ellison, Attorney General for Minnesota, debriefed on legal actions they are taking against landlords who are violating the statewide eviction moratorium by shutting off utilities and other tactics. Their office has a hotline for renters to report abuses. Concerned about mounting renter debt, they're trying to have conversations with financial services institutions, and coordinating tracking assistance that needs to be passed from the top down.
- Megan Gibbard Kline of A Way Home: Youth Homelessness discussed how ESH providers can tailor their responses to young people of color and LGBTQ individuals. She emphasized the importance of incorporating people with lived experiences into decision making. More resources [here](#).
- In Texas, absent a statewide eviction moratorium, cities like Austin and Dallas have passed their own ordinances. Courts are requiring an affidavit from landlords that their properties are not covered by the federal moratorium.
- Will Fischer, Senior Director for Housing Policy and Research, Center of Budget and Policy Priorities, spoke of the need for a massively expanded temporary housing voucher program. HUD has already been issuing waivers for inspection requirements, which should make it

easier to scale up. Political concern about the cost in the long term could be ameliorated by making the vouchers temporary.

- Sarah Saadian of NLIHC discussed what's up the docket for when the Senate returns to session, May 4th. Democrats (and a few supportive GOP behind the scenes) are laying the groundwork for the next spending package, and housing and homelessness will be a priority, but we don't know to what extent at this point. They are open to talking about longer-term and sunseting vouchers, but it is unknown if there will be broader infrastructure in the package.

National News

1. [Victoria, BC](#) enacted a provincial order to move houseless people from Victoria encampments into hotels. This will provide housing for 600 people in three encampments. Vancouver has secured 686 hotel rooms, and Victoria has 324. One of the facilities in both locations will be for women only. The article also notes complications for opioid users, as disruptions in overseas supply has led to new formulations that put users at increased risk of overdose.
2. [New Jersey](#) announced an Administrative Order protecting access to hotels and motels for individuals without safe, permanent housing. This means that localities cannot make rules prohibiting people experiencing homelessness from moving into hotels/motels, and that people with this living arrangement are protected from eviction under Executive Order No. 106.
3. [San Francisco](#) failed to meet their April 26th deadline to secure 8,250 hotel rooms for people experiencing homelessness and frontline workers. As of April 27th they had leased a total of 2,741 rooms, 1,130 of which were empty due to lack of staffing or other preparations. [Mayor Breed](#) has announced that she will defy the order by the Board of Supervisors to acquire the rooms by the deadline, on the grounds that it cannot be safely accomplished. Advocates [gathered](#) outside the Mayor's home on April 30th in protest.
4. [Alameda County, CA](#) (Oakland) leased three additional hotel rooms for non-congregate sheltering. These hotels will add 262 more rooms to the County's 393. The six-month cost for the five leases, some of which include meals, is about \$7 million.
5. A [recent study](#) of COVID cases in a Boston shelter revealed a 35% positivity rate, with 87.8% of that cohort exhibiting no symptoms. This suggests that current screening practices may not capture the prevalence of the virus in this highly contagious environment.
6. [Memphis, TN](#) has secured 125 hotel rooms for individuals and households experiencing homelessness. A portion of Memphis' \$2m ESG program award will be used to reimburse the city for expenses related to hotel lodging.
7. [In New York City](#), City Council member Steven Levin introduced legislation to offer all residents of congregate shelters and unsheltered adults (12,000 people total) hotel rooms. Mayor De Blasio opposes the initiative, arguing it will cost too much, but advocates counter that FEMA could reimburse the entire bill (except supportive services), because the President has agreed to waive the state's cost sharing-requirement. Some advocates

theorize the Mayor's true concern is moving individuals out of the rooms, as the emergency subsides.

8. Meanwhile [in Los Angeles](#), progress on securing the County's goal of 15,000 rooms has stalled, with 2,711 rooms under lease and 1,550 of those occupied. Legal Aid is calling on leaders to use their emergency powers to commandeer the needed rooms. However, other attorneys have argued that using eminent domain laws could further stall progress, as there is a process in place that could take 60 to 120 days for each property.
9. [Michigan](#) became the latest state to secure FEMA funding for non-congregate shelters. They will serve the same populations most other hotel initiatives have targeted.

Other resources

- The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project just released [a map of tenant protections](#) nationwide.
- National Healthcare for The Homeless Council is calling for comprehensive testing services for people experiencing homelessness. More information on their recommendations [here](#).
- The American Hotel and Lodging Association has created a [response handbook](#) for converting hotels into emergency shelter sites.
- The NLIHC released [a guidebook](#) to working with FEMA to address housing and homelessness needs.
- The NAEH has created [a framework](#) for COVID-19 homelessness response.