

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 5, 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, September 28 - October 4

News

1. After intensive organizing, [Philadelphia Housing Action](#) has reached a deal with the city to transfer 15 vacant city-owned homes to a community land trust established by the group. The homes will house 50 mothers and children experiencing homelessness. The strategy and outcome echoes Oakland's recent [Moms 4 Housing](#) action.
2. On a related note, [California](#) Governor Gavin Newsom signed SB 1079, which requires foreclosure homes to be sold individually rather than at auction, and to give the tenant the right of first refusal. The bill was inspired by the [Moms 4 Housing](#) occupation of a vacant Oakland home. [Project Homekey](#) is also in full swing, with millions in grants being issued to municipalities across the state. The \$600 million initiative provides funding to convert buildings to housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
3. [Los Angeles County](#) will acquire [eight motels](#) through the Project Homekey initiative, at the cost of \$75.5 million, \$14.7 million of which will come out of the county's coronavirus relief funds. The rest will be funded through the state's relief funds.
4. According to a new report, between 10 - 14 million [renter households](#) are behind on their rent by \$12 - \$17 billion. This will increase to \$25 - \$34 billion by the end of the year, with up to 8.4 million renters possibly facing eviction in January. Meanwhile, [at least 26 lawsuits](#) have been filed by property owners against various government entities over the moratoriums. The Apartment Association of Greater [Los Angeles](#) is among them.
5. The Kentucky Equal Justice Center has created an app to streamline the process of [filling out the CDC Eviction Declaration](#). It can be used by renters nationwide.
6. In the midst of a statewide increase of COVID cases in [Utah](#), one Salt Lake City homeless shelter reported 72 confirmed cases.
7. In [Oregon](#), the Almeda fire destroyed around 2,700 housing structures, exacerbating the existing housing shortage in the Rogue Valley. Many of these homes were occupied by seniors and farmworkers. Governor Kate Brown [extended the state eviction moratorium](#) through the end of 2020.

8. In [Pima County](#), AZ (Tucson) homelessness is estimated to have increased by 58%. Many working households are falling through the cracks despite moratoriums and rental assistance.
9. The US Census Bureau released data from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), showing that [nearly 20 million renter households were cost-burdened](#) before the pandemic.
10. NPR explores [the connection between housing stability and health](#).
11. [Climate change and worsening wildfires](#) take an especially grave toll on the health of unhoused people.
12. The struggle over homeless hotel shelters in [New York City](#)'s Upper West Side is emblematic of race and class divides that will likely deepen as the pandemic progresses.

National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) weekly call and updates (September 28)

Peter Hepburn, Eviction Lab: We're tracking 17 sites, and have identified 53,579 filings in those sites. Some of the cities we're monitoring are still under local moratoria, and some that are just under the CDC order have seen drops since that went into effect. The CDC moratorium does have some effect on eviction filings, but it's varied across jurisdictions. While many households receiving eviction filings may be less likely to receive an actual writ of eviction, the filings can still be damaging. There's a lot of variation in how the CDC order is being interpreted, and that means the process is being stopped in various places depending on jurisdiction.

Michael Stepner, Professor, University of Toronto: High income Americans have mostly returned to their baseline employment levels, but for low-income it's reduced their employment level baseline by about 15%. We're using data from private companies to look at the employment landscape, companies like American Express and payroll services. We use this data for two main purposes: the mechanisms through which COVID is contributing to economic devastation, and how effective the policy responses have been. We start with the finding that spending has fallen much more for rich Americans than for poor Americans. Spending was down by \$3 billion for the richest, but \$1 billion for low-income. So the richest Americans are driving the downturn in spending, and that's mainly face-to-face businesses. The places where small businesses are suffering the most are where the richest live. For example the financial district in NYC. As a result you have a massive reduction in spending driven by people staying at home, and that's flowing through to employment. So while the richest Americans have recovered in their ability to earn wages, recovery has flatlined for low-income households.

In July consumer spending was down 7%, and the causes of that were not equally spread across the economic spectrum. Spending is up for large companies like Amazon and Walmart, which don't tend to employ as many low-income workers. Policywise, we have the Paycheck Protection Programs, the Economic Recovery Act, etc. The reopenings interestingly had little impact on spending: consumers don't seem to be rushing out the door to spend. The same thing can be seen with employment - reopening doesn't have much of an effect. With the stimulus payments, there's a

huge effect on the spending of low-income Americans. Most of the spending went to durable goods and utilities, not in-person services. So the money isn't reaching businesses where there have been the most layoffs. The payroll subsidies cost about \$250,000 per job it protects, with an average wage around \$40,000, and they're usually not jobs that would have been lost anyway. There has also been a dramatic effect in remote learning, where people in more affluent areas had a small downturn in learning engagement (5%), but was much higher (50%) in low-income areas. So we need to increase employment in these face-to-face sectors, which we can really only do by combatting the virus. In the meantime we need to target support to the people who are most impacted, which are low-income individuals.

Jobs that pay more than \$60,000 have recovered, but jobs that make \$27,000 or less have not made any recovery. The unemployment expansion was one of the most important supports we have, and we're anxious to know how it has impacted people. We're conducting a study on this currently and look forward to sharing the results.

[Presentation slides](#)

Brittani Manzo, Director of Public Policy, National Innovation Service: The White House has been ramping up its race-baiting behavior. Now there's a new policy change that prohibits federal grants from being used for addressing anti-sexism/sexual identity and racism. This executive order has significant potential for undermining COVID relief efforts, especially where they're directed toward communities of colors, which have been disproportionately impacted. It's not just impacting our national response, but it's also intentional. The white house is bolstering white supremacy with these orders. Refusing to address the impact of structural racism makes sure that we're going to continue to have inadequate policies. Stoking racial tensions and promoting racism is an election strategy. It's also true that these orders impact the effectiveness of our work in housing and homelessness. We have to make sure we don't allow racial equity work to diminish. The order says that training workshops cannot focus on these issues. That means that state and city funds will have to fill these gaps.

Capacity funding initiatives that are funded by the federal government will lose the equity lens. We're really concerned about programs that are serving families experiencing homelessness, in that they're disproportionately Black. I've been reaching out to colleagues about writing a joint statement to release publicly. There is also an offer of pro-bono legal support for communities who would like to analyze the impact of this order and are interested in suing the administration. Do not take your foot off the gas in pursuing racial equity and justice.

[Sign on to our statement](#)

Peter Hainley, ED, CASA of Oregon: We primarily assist organizations that provide farmworker housing and other types of affordable housing. At the time of the fires we were also working on a farm worker study to understand the impacts of COVID. We were just releasing those results, and as everyone can probably imagine, farmworkers are at a disadvantage when it comes to COVID and

housing. There was a lot of devastation in some of the mobile home communities in Southern Oregon. The fire destroyed over 2,000 homes. Those communities suffered as most of the parks were completely destroyed. About 75% of them were mobile homes. So trying to understand what the clean up is going to look like is a conundrum. There was already a need for about 5,500 units, and in the parks alone we lost about 1,700. Many of those were occupied by farmworkers. We already knew that about 50% were rent-burdened. With this devastation comes an opportunity to look at what the recovery effort will look like. Our work at CASA is looking at the long-term recovery. Looking at fires in other areas, we know this is going to be a long term recovery. We're looking at how we can collaborate with other community groups in these areas. Now we're also looking at how we can use this survey, doing a second phase that's more in-depth and follow up with some of our original participants. We're just diving into this right now and trying to understand how we can repurpose this survey. We're collaborating with groups in CA and WA and have had their support with figuring out how we can adapt this. The goal is to make sure these cities and counties have the opportunity to hear from these impacted communities.

Michael Goz, CEO, American Indian Community Development Corporation: We serve Hennepin County, MI. We used CARES Act funds to purchase a property to open a shelter - so we got \$3.5 million to open a 50-bed shelter in Minneapolis. We're currently in the rehab phase. The shelter space will also offer permanent supportive housing. The state is willing to supply up to 20 beds of PSH for that property.

Q: There has been some confusion about how to interpret CARES funds in terms of applying it to this type of project. Can you speak to that?

A: Because of COVID we've had to reduce occupancy for various kinds of shelter, so we are not *expanding* shelter beds, but stabilizing them in a safe way.

Other resources:

1. [Getting the most vulnerable housed using mainstream vouchers](#)
2. Democrats continue to negotiate the [HEROES Act funding](#) with the GOP. It includes additional homelessness funds.
3. HUD's guidelines for a [Rapid Rehousing](#) ramp-up
4. NLIHC's resource [guide for the CDC moratorium](#), including the declaration form translated into thirteen languages
5. A [new report](#) shows that permanent supportive housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness leads to lower use of psychiatric emergency departments and shelters, and higher rates of housing and community mental health treatment.