

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 30, 2020

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

From: Lauren E. M. Everett
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Subject: Updates on COVID-19 and disaster response, housing, and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, November 23–29.

News

1. In the [Bay Area](#) (excluding San Francisco), only 16% (345 out of 2,196) of people who have been discharged from homeless hotel shelter programs have been placed in permanent housing. The other 84% have gone to emergency shelters, transitional housing, are living with friends or family, in hotels paid for with private funds, in drug rehab facilities, jail, or tents/cars/encampments. Localities across California are [preparing to end hotel shelter programs](#) that have accommodated more than 23,000 people during the pandemic, citing the uncertainty of federal funding sources. More on [the current status of Project Roomkey](#).
2. Protesters in [Baltimore](#) on Saturday demanded the mayor provide permanent housing for everyone who needs it, halt a plan to reopen congregate shelters, and sign bills that would help households facing eviction. Over 400 evictions have been carried out in Baltimore since August. On Monday the Mayor's office announced it is looking for [other funding sources](#) to continue the hotel program, and on Wednesday announced that the [city will use FEMA funds](#) to extend the hotel program through March 31.
3. The [New Jersey](#) Senate is considering a bill that would give tenants who have lost income due to the pandemic up to 30 months to repay rental debt. Not surprisingly, the measure is highly controversial with landlords.
4. In [New York City](#), the battle over whether to continue the shelter program at The Lucerne Hotel has bitterly divided the community. A judge ruled Wednesday that the 200 residents [will have to vacate the hotel](#) and complete a planned relocation to a Radisson downtown. Meanwhile plans are moving ahead to convert a hotel in [Brooklyn](#)'s DUMBO neighborhood into 491 affordable and supportive housing residences.
5. After months of community opposition, [Renton](#) City Council (a suburb of Seattle) has introduced an emergency ordinance to rewrite zoning code in order to restrict the siting of homeless shelters. This would also entail setting a six-month move-out date for 200 guests currently living at the Red Lion Hotel.

National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) weekly call and updates (November 23)

Diane Yentel, President & CEO, NLIHC: We are facing the very real possibility of no forthcoming rental assistance by the time the federal moratorium expires. The outcome would be catastrophic, with millions of evictions in the dead of winter, during the pandemic. The CDC moratorium, however flawed, is keeping many people housed and we need to focus on educating tenants about their rights. On our website we have the declaration form translated into fourteen different languages, and you can request paper copies that we will send to you. We should also be urging governors and mayors to implement state or local eviction moratoriums. We're urging everyone to spend all available funds for emergency rental assistance. We're tracking the spending of federal dollars and it's very concerning that over \$360 million is unspent in coronavirus relief dollars that will have to go back to the federal government at the end of the year.

We have to continue putting pressure on Congress to take action. Working with and engaging President-elect Biden's [transition team](#) is also important. President-elects create agency landing teams who are responsible for getting to know everything about each department. So there's one that focuses on HUD, which entails meeting with staff, figuring out vacancies, challenges, and what they would want to change. They think about the first day to the first 100 days of the administration. The landing team is a great group of experts, which is a relief. We've been having conversations on a number of relevant topics with the team and stakeholders. One of the things we are urging on the first day of action is for Biden to implement a new eviction moratorium.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee, California: What you're doing each and every day is to keep 'housing as a human right' front and center. As you know, I represent the 13th Congressional District, and we face some of the biggest obstacles to housing for all in the country. How you're moving forward assertively and aggressively, with making sure the eviction moratorium is extended and more, is remarkable. We're facing an unprecedented housing and homelessness crisis which was in place before the pandemic. Now that we're facing a potential eviction tsunami there's an even more clear connection between housing and health. I support a rental assistance program, which we put into the HEROES Act. I'm proud to support Senator Garcia's bill to extend the eviction ban. McConnell wants to put a pause in federal stimulus to see how the CARES Act pans out, but that's wrong because we're facing a crisis without that aid.

Yentel: It's exciting to have an incoming administration that believes housing is a human right, and you are absolutely right that we need this assistance. Is there anything else we can do to pass the HEROES Act?

Lee: I think we need to focus on the Senate in the short term. In the long term I think we need to fight for the elimination of poverty by passing bills that I and other legislators have introduced. What you're doing now is what needs to be done, and next year let's talk about a comprehensive strategy.

Davin Reed, Community Development Economic Advisor, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia: Our [new report](#) covers household debt in rent that might be owed when moratoriums expire. It's hard to come with accurate numbers, but it's critical to understanding what kind of aid households might need. We use data from a national representative sample of people who were working before COVID. We simulate monthly individual job losses and gains with data on aggregate employment changes and the occupational risk of job loss. We also forecast resulting household rental debt by month under different policy scenarios. We had over 30 million renter households working before the pandemic, and over 20% lost income during the pandemic. By December of this year, 1.3 million renter households will be in debt by an average of \$5,400 each. When you break it down by race, Latino, Black, and then White and Asian households have the highest levels of debt. This is 3.9 million individuals. We recommend extending unemployment insurance, and making alternative sources of support available, particularly for individuals not receiving unemployment insurance. The existing CARES aid is insufficient, and distribution program design is crucial for making sure the money gets out there.

Q: Some researchers use the Pulse Survey data to come up with their estimates. How do you calculate your estimates?

A: The surveys often come up with much higher numbers of estimated need. What we're doing is separating needs before the pandemic with need during it. With Pulse there's nothing pre-COVID to compare the numbers to. Our study is showing how much the increase is with a baseline, whereas Pulse is showing the total volume of need. We have data from the CES on how many people lost jobs, so we can use that data to simulate an estimated outcome. Another reason our numbers aren't as high as they could be is that employment has come back a little bit since the beginning of the pandemic. For those who did get it, the CARES UI was very impactful—but the issue is that not everyone received/is receiving it.

Dan Threet, Research Analyst, NLIHC: We just [released a report](#) on the cost of evictions. It's focused on all possible renters at risk of evictions. Most of you know the coalition has been pushing since spring for strong measures that will protect renters. Over the last five months the research team has been publishing research notes that estimate the need for, and cost of, providing needed rental assistance. This research focuses on the downstream effects beyond the impacts on the renter households. Our joint report focuses on costs if households are allowed to enter homelessness, such as shelters, juvenile costs, etc. We hope this will make an important supplementary argument for the need for rental assistance.

McKenzie Pish, Innovation for Justice Program, University of Arizona: US Census data reveals that 16% of renters were behind on rent in October. One in four renters have no or slight confidence that they can pay next month's rent on time. People are responding by spending savings and selling assets, and making cuts in basic expenses. The partial cost of eviction-related homelessness could be as high as \$129 billion. The lower model of eviction prediction is 6.7 million households. This number is modest. Renters with no or slight confidence to pay rent are running

out of resources to do so. The forecasts developed by Stout predict much higher numbers. The lower number is 9.5 million and the higher is 13.9 million. The five categories we measure in this partial cost assessment are shelters, emergency medical care, inpatient medical care, foster care, and juvenile delinquency. These are only some of the costs, so these are only a starting point. Regardless of which model you look at, if our leadership doesn't take on the economic costs of keeping people housed we will all collectively bear the costs of evicting our neighbors.

Q: This is really a conservative estimate. About 25% of people who are evicted will need these services. When we're faced with so many evictions at once, that number might be much higher so the costs would be much higher. Someone asked how many people who are at risk of losing their housing leave before eviction?

A: Some portion of the renters included in the Pulse data will just leave before an eviction filing.

Q: Is there a way to estimate the cost in low-income communities of color where people are more likely to double up?

A: If you visit our online tool, enter the number of renters you think are at risk in your community and it will show you the estimated cost. We don't have a way to isolate communities of color but if you have that data you can apply it accordingly (e.g. specifically focus on those communities).

Q: How about the long-term costs?

A: It does not include the damage to credit, or long-term medical needs or housing assistance. The estimates we have here are costs that are likely to accrue in the next 18 months.

Laurie Goodman, Co-Director, Housing Finance Policy Center, Urban Institute: We conducted a survey about the challenges facing small landlords. We found that 35% did not receive full rent in September and 38% did not expect to receive full rent in October. The most common reason was that tenants didn't or couldn't pay in full (77.7%), and the second most common was a high vacancy rate (28.5%). Additionally, 31% of landlords overall felt more pressure to sell their property. This varied according to income level and the presence of a mortgage. Black and Latino landlords are more likely to have imposed stricter screening criteria since the beginning of the pandemic. This shows that pressure on landlords is growing, and we anticipate it will continue to grow. The situation is going to get worse unless a rental assistance program is passed. This will create a loss of affordable homes. The bottom line is that the eviction moratorium isn't a long term solution—we need rental assistance.

Q: How do the vacancy rates compare to pre-COVID?

A: These are people who own one or two units, so it's important to keep in mind the impact of vacancy in their income.

Q: Are there any trends on increased sale of properties yet?

A: It's hard to see who's selling properties, but you see inventories at very low levels. There's a 20-year low in single family homes on the market, but selling is something you will see if this goes on.

Q: What type of assistance can local governments provide?

A: Tax relief would help, but we really need rental assistance.

Dena Hasan, Director, DC Department of Human Services: This intervention is called the Pandemic Emergency Program for Medically Vulnerable Individuals (PEP-V). It targets people who are at the highest risk in the unhoused population. It's often confused with our isolation and quarantine site program. It was launched through the Mayor's emergency powers. This is specifically for DC's COVID response. Everyone who is placed in a program site is tested first, and has wraparound services like behavioral care and housing counselors. We have three sites. The first one was launched in March, second one in May, and third last month in October. There are about 417 rooms in the program with 540 current participants. The program has evolved as we learn more about COVID transmission and prevention. I wanted to share some of the things that have changed with our program process over the past few months. The first thing is the eligibility criteria. When we first launched we wanted to prioritize the highest-risk individuals. So people over 80 or over 70 with severe lung disease or chronic diabetes, with a small group of people with other health issues.

As the CDC provided more guidance, we lowered the age and expanded our list of chronic health conditions. Our current criteria is anyone over 55 years old, or any age with a longer list of chronic health conditions. As we surveyed how other states responded to the crises we looked at New York and Connecticut and saw that they did room sharing at their hotels. When we first launched the program we had individuals in single rooms, but now we share rooms to make the resources more impactful. We consider various factors like lifestyle when we match people up. We have case workers ask people how their roommate situation is going, and have adapted based on that feedback. We allow a limited volume of alcohol in the program sites because we want to encourage them to stay at the site. This is a maximum of two 12 oz bottles of beer or wine. When we first launched, we had a really high level of medical care, but learned that many of our clients didn't need it, so we transitioned to a clinic model with medical staff on site for part of the day.

Q: How do clients access this program?

A: We've put out this information through a variety of channels including hospitals and shelters. Clients can also refer themselves now through an online form. We ask for all the relevant health aspects.

Q: How are you funding this work?

A: FEMA

Q: How are you accessing permanent housing?

A: Clients are matched using our coordinated entry system. If they meet the criteria for permanent housing they are matched with housing.

Other resources:

1. The Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard reports on how [affordability challenges for low income homeowners](#) have increased during COVID.
2. Webinar videos are now available for NYU Furman Center's [Under One Roof: Building an Abolitionist Approach to Housing Justice](#).