Weekly COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call

Wednesday, June 3rd, 10-11:00am via Zoom

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| Time | Topic | Lead | Notes |
| 10:00  5 min  Emily | Welcome & Settle in | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * Acknowledging the sad week * Taking the time to speak the names of George Floyd, Charleena Lyles, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor * The racism that has allowed racist policies and police killings is the same racism that has caused the disproportionate impact of the housing crisis on people of color * We shared a statement of solidarity: <https://www.wliha.org/blog/we-stand-solidarity-black-lives-matter> * Also shared ways we can take action. * One of our members, Solid Ground, has made a call to pause at noon in honor of people of color who have been victimized by the police * 1 hour today, back to the longer call next week * Talk about state budget, push on how to respond to downturn not with austerity, but to fix our regressive tax structure * Last week we were hoping to have someone from the Latino Farmworkers Alliance to talk about what’s happening in Yakima. * From Michele: Please take the opportunity to watch the NLIHC talk with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi: <https://nlihc.org/resource/dr-ibram-kendi-joins-nlihcs-diane-yentel-discuss-racial-justice-time-covid-19> |
| 10:05  5 min  Caroline/Kiki - screenshots | Poll Questions |  | * Who is joining us today? * WA is receiving a shortfall of how much? $7 billion * Pandemic EBT Funding – for 2019-2020 school year, how many students are eligible for free and reduced school lunch? 511,000 which is 43% of students in WA |
| 10:10  10 min  Teresa | Updates from the Department of Commerce | Tedd Kelleher and Diane Klontz, Dept. of Commerce | * Q: about 30k additional homeless – that number didn’t come from Commerce. The 30k # he’s seen is from NLIHC modeling that shows 30k additional low income households becoming extremely cost-burdened during covid. This wouldn’t necessarily mean a 1:1 increase in # of people experiencing homelessness, not to downplay impact of 30k people becoming extremely cost-burdened. * Q: How much additional funding will we see for housing assistance in the CARES Act? A: Not known at this point. * Shelter program: $40M for cities and counties. 1 more day of public comment on shelter grant proposal; please comment! Program has a racial equity component, ensures people can get into housing quickly without unnecessary rules. * To comment on the proposed state funded shelter program design, go to: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/hau-shelter-grant-request-for-stakeholder-feedback-5.26.20.pdf> * Q: How will counties moving into stage 2 deal with congregate shelter? We were told that if there were an outbreak in congregate shelter, hotel vouchers would be used to get people spread out. A: (Diane Klontz) Speaking with Gov this afternoon and will have more info to share later after that. * Diane: A lot of rumors about state general fund reductions. As many know, Gov office & OFM request each state agency look at general fund budgets and make recommendations for cuts up to 15%. Dept of Commerce’s bottom line reduction adds up to $21.6M in cuts. Overall community services & housing budget is over 80% of their overall budget, so inevitable that they will have to make cuts to homeless services. Will be transparent once decision is made, but many factors at play (special session, new revenue forecast in 2 weeks, etc.). They will keep us posted. * We have Misha with us today to talk about importance of progressive revenue in face of budget cuts. * Q: What is the closing date to apply for the grants? A: Commerce's goal is that Shelter Grant applicants have about 4 weeks to respond, so mid July. Aiming to have a simple application and get funds out quickly. * Q: In Phase 2, do counties have to provide preventive supplies (like sanitizer and masks) and resources (like hand-washing stations) for unsheltered people who are gathering in public but are not living in shelter? A: * Q: Is there any opportunity through the shelter grant or otherwise through Commerce to use Commerce $ to purchase buildings?  A: The way the legislation is written there’s up to $10k per bed. Written to be very flexible about how the funds are used. * From Tedd in chat: To comment on shelter funding proposal from Commerce - [https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/office-of-family-and-adult-homelessness/](https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/office-of-family-and-adult-homelessness/ ) |
| 10:20  10 min  Emily | Updates on Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) for kids who qualify for free or reduced priced school meals | Claire Lane & Christina Wong, Anti-hunger and Nutrition Coalition | * This pandemic EBT was created in congresses family first act, designed to help families with school aged kids to help kids when schools are closed * Almost every school district has been feeding kids, not every school has * Schools have been amazingly creative, had to pivot faster because schools have closed first * The way they have been feeding kids, free meal for any kids. Don’t need to prove anything, even if they are student. Operating on summer school meal * Only reaching ½ of the kids they normally serve, tough --> congress put out this plan at the end of march * P-EBT is not SNAP, designed to protect school meals. Based on school meals, which isn’t impacted by someone’s immigration status. So, it will look like the same card, but it is different * 399 per kid: breakfast and lunch per day * For families who are on SNAP: will suddenly see 399 dollars on their existing EBT card * For families who had those reduced lunches, but NOT on SNAP: They must fill out an application, but it’s even less of an app process than the lunch, don’t require SSN. This program isn’t part of public charge * This is where two state agencies don’t talk to each other * The app will be on WA Connection on DSHS website, not live yet. * For families who became newly eligible those kids will get that benefit prorated through the end of school from the day they applied for school meals * Q: Can undocumented get access? A: Yes, if they’ve applied for school meals for their children. As we all know immigrants regardless of their status have been shut out of the relief efforts. Racist systems, extremely racist roll out of programs. * Q: Can unaccompanied you? A: If a kid qualified for school meal, they are eligible. You need to make sure your school district right now has your updated information * Q: What about kids not enrolled in school meals? A: You must be enrolled in a k-12 school that offers a school lunch program. In WA is almost ever public school and lots of public schools * Q: Do you have a link to share now? A: Nope, putting together communications now. * Not based on age, both kids over 18 enrolled in school lunch, also a kid in a pre-school program housed in a k-12 school with school lunch program, they will also be eligible * Resource shared by Christina, but not WA specific: <https://frac.org/pebt> |
| 10:30  10 min  Kiki | The need for progressive revenue to strengthen Washington's economy during and after the COVID-19 crisis | Misha Werschkul, Budget and Policy Center | * For those not familiar with policy center –we're an advocacy org and research partner working with groups across the state to promote public policy that promotes .. and wellbeing * Talk is cheap and when it comes to who we are as a community/society, the budget is the place where we reflect those values * Appreciate the acknowledgement of need to end police brutality * Trying to figure out what this means for us as an org and advocacy going forward * We know that at all levels of gov there's a significant amount of funding in police, prisons, etc. * Cynthia Stewart in chat: 5% of the overall state budget; 75% of local budgets * It’s clear from the moment that we’re in and the continued use of public resources to brutalize members of our community that we need to rethink how we are approaching this. how do we talk about these investment s and make sure there's accountability for public resources? * Have to talk about the over policing of black citizens and over incarceration * Acknowledging that the crisis we’re thinking about of the covid-19 pandemic layers on top of an existing set of crisis facing our communities. Two systemic issues that make it worse: 1) fact that state budget investments have been steadily declining as a share of personal income for decades. Especially after the recession. Can see it all areas of the budgets. Cuts made during the great recession, just trying to get back to the pre-status quo before the recession hit in 2008 * WA state has the most regressive tax system in the country. Disproportionately tax these services and poorest in the community * Fund our services through the pocketbook of black and brown * Low income pay 7 x more than the wealthiest in the state * When covid 19 type of things hit, the particular impact on low income folks and POC, no surprise state revenue drops * $7 bill shortfall over next 3 years. Numbers from OFM * Expect here that the numbers will grow in terms of magnitude of budget shortfall * Based on indicators we’re tracking; impact will be much more significant than the great recession * Will put paper in the chat that shows cumulative impact across the country – facing budget shortfalls for several years. Could even be greater than the great depression. Beyond what any of us has seen in terms of working in advocacy and tracking state budget issues * Unemployment – numbers are already higher than great recession, drop in GDP is greater. Demand for public services skyrocketing. Level of need that communities have are at par or greater than levels of the great recession * When it comes to progressive revenue, our state is at. Across roads on how we want to respond to this crisis. Approach moving forward to cutting the budget – we know what the outcomes will be: long economic downturn that stags, devastating impact on those who rely on the services, and deepening inequality in our community. Coming out of the recession, saw poverty rates in creasing. Black and indigenous communities and folks already experiencing marginalization fell further behind as a result of recession * State cuts spending during economic downturn will lead to longer recession. Unless states keep money moving, will be in downturn for long time * Decision to have legislators open up convos around progressive revenue challenging but options on the table. We have a lot of options when it comes to taxing wealth in our communities. Even though this is painful, I dispute the fact that not enough wealth in WA state. Heartbreaking to see the stock market do well in this period of economic crisis. Confusing why that is happening. means capital gains tax that brings in small profit from the stock market seems reasonable way to keep food on ppl’s table * Certainly, hopeful that that alternative path is available. Making sure we have an option that’s not just draconian cuts to the system * What can individuals do to help build that political will we need? * A: continuing to talk to state leg about need to have progressive revenue on the table as an option. Folks want to find a diff path but skeptical that there is one – need to hear from advocates across the sector that we will work with them to find a different path * RM: Really important election year – every seat in the house is up for election. Campaign season will look different this year, but pay attention for opportunities to talk to candidates as they are running about progressive revenue |
| 10:40  5 min  Caroline | Federal Policy and Advocacy Updates | Rachael Myers | * NLIHC mtg yesterday, Speaker Pelosi encouraged us to continue sharing stories. Those stories make a difference for those who are not yet supportive of what we’re asking for * Recently passed in the House included rent assistance bill created by Rep. Denny Heck * Senate has not taken this up yet * We have heard that there is a feeling of urgency to get next relief pkg done soon, by late July before the August recess * Action that is up is still relevant – We're asking people who have not signed on, we’re asking them to support this and thanking others who did sign on. Please use: bit.ly/rentreliefnow * A: No, Senator Cantwell has not signed on yet * Poll from Opportunity Starts at HOME Campaign to let them know that public supports * "The vast majority of the public, on a bipartisan basis, believes the government should:   + Provide emergency rental assistance for people who are struggling to afford the rent and are at serious risk of eviction as a result of the coronavirus outbreak (93% favor);   + Expand funding for homeless assistance programs that minimize the number of people living in large shelters by providing them with alternative individual spaces for isolation and self-quarantine (90% favor); and   + Enact a uniform, nationwide policy that stops all evictions during the coronavirus outbreak (89% favor).   + Over half (54%) of all people express concern that they will lose their housing if they don’t get additional assistance to help cover the costs – and this concern is more acute among lower-income households and people of color (61% of households making below $40,000 say this is a concern; and 72% of African Americans and 76% of Latinos say this is a concern, compared to 43% of whites). Additionally, 66% of people say the amount they pay for housing is a concern, with 44% saying it is a big concern. Of all people who said it’s a concern, 65% say their concern about the amount they pay for housing has increased since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.“ * <https://www.opportunityhome.org/poll-the-public-highly-concerned-about-housing-instability-during-covid-19-expects-major-action-from-congress/> * What about funding for new housing? Congress is talking more about response to coronavirus * Now Maxine Waters – house infrastructure; HRF and infrastructure * Continue raising the need with local media and Letters to the Editor * John: Letters to the Editor; colleagues have been working on a template that calls on additional pressure for funding needed and much more support on housing and homelessness at all levels of government * We have a running list of media to send letter to * Interested please fill out this form: https://bit.ly/300ao1s |
| 10:45  5 min  Kiki | State Policy and Advocacy Updates | Michele Thomas | * Thanks to everyone who has taken action. Hundreds of orgs signed on. As of this morning 1048 people signed the individual petition. Please sign if you haven't already * in addition to extend the moratorium, many other requests in the petition that is still not met. Other asks that we have related to money from the state to be set aside for rental assistance, to prohibit sweeps, covid dollars to foreclosure protection, FEMA dollars, hotels access, isolation quarantine for folks in overcrowded, 25% of relief funds for students experiencing homelessness/in child welfare * Calling on the governor to propose progressive revenue as an alternative to austerity approach. What Misha talked about is stark. Vast majority is paying a disproportionate amount of income for public resource but when there's a downturn the first thing we do is cut those services. Will take a massive movement to demand otherwise. Please sign petition if haven’t already, please send around to networks. * Dark times right now, thank everyone and also recognize that our action is working. Moratorium extended yesterday. Appreciate that. Now extended to august 2/end of aug 1. immediate relief. But is not a rent holiday. If can afford to pay, please pay. Once its lifted will owe rent. * Going to see if we can provide more time. To attorney general’s office to see if they can go through in detail the new moratorium. * No there is not yet if there is or when there will be a special session. Some want as soon as possible as June, others want to wait to fall. June 17 will get first official revenue forecast. Meet yesterday to give economic update, on the 17 will give update and projection of the impacts. Lawmakers waiting for that to figure out how to proceed * Underscoring the importance of the petition. If there is a special session in June then it will be to cut * Moratorium – extends august 2, 11:59 on August 1. prohibits landlords, etc. to serve notice to vacate, new exception to that: if the landlord claims through the affidavit that the eviction is necessary to respond to health and safety, newly property, or if the owner provides at least 60 days limit to move into the property OR to sell the property, that’s allowed. But need to provide affidavit to court to prove true. Late fees not allowed after Feb 29. When residents access to the property not possible due to covid. Landlord required to offer payment plan, and if do not prevent from evicted, reporting to credit bureau/debt. Required to require individualized payment plan if want to collect rears on rent. Prohibition on rent increase continues, including threat * change in moratorium exemption for commercial properties rent increase. * Retaliation prohibited for evoking rights * We will try to provide more info as time goes on, possible on next weeks call. Will be in touch on more opportunities to take action soon |
| 10:50  10 min  Emily | Q&A |  | (Ran out of time) |
| 11:00    Teresa | Wrap-up & Adjourn |  | Thank you more than ever for the work you’ve been doing in your communities. Keep it up and keep taking care of each other. |