Weekly COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call Notes

Wednesday, October 14, 10:00-11:15am via Zoom

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|  | Topic | Speaker | Notes |
| 10:005 min | Welcome & Settle in | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * Tedd will share updates on state’s homelessness response and what we know about what’s owed in back rent.
* Monserrat will talk about the roll out of $40m for the WA Immigrant Relief Fund.
* Rep. Macri will give an update on the state budget & legislative session.
* Michele will discuss our likely priorities for the 2021 session and data from the Pulse survey about how people are being impacted by COVID-19.
* Eric will talk about HUD’s most recent disparate impact rule, which will make it harder to address racism in housing.
* Most of you know the Gov announced an extension of the eviction moratorium last week. In WA we had strong protections in place, some concern that with a national moratorium there might be less pressure for him to extend our state moratorium, so we’re glad he did. News out now that the national moratorium will be weakened by new guidance. We should see details on the new moratorium today, not expecting major changes.
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| 10:055 min | Poll Questions | * **Where are you joining from today?**

* **Are you familiar with the term ‘disparate impact’ and how it relates to housing policy?**

* **Do you have a story to share with lawmakers that relates to any of our housing and homelessness agenda items? (I.e. Have you experienced the value of an affordable home? Fallen behind on rent or threatened with eviction? Faced barriers to housing I.e. criminal or eviction history?)**
	+ If you are yes/not sure/know someone who does – please reach out to John at johns@wliha.org - we’re organizing stories to share for advocacy and will send out a survey

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| 10:1010 min | Updates on the state’s homelessness response | Ted, Kelleher, Department of Commerce staff | * Slides
* Have spent time talking with many people here on this call
* Survey out today to ask about how things are going with spending, need, capacity, etc.
* We want to ask for more funds and want to be ready the processes
* Slide: Unmet need for Rental Assistance
* Lots of data sets
* Census Pulse Survey: 7% of WA renters not able to pay rent = 78k households = $100 million not being paid a month
* ERAP was only $100M
* Disproportionate with Black households
* So our ask is not too much
* Slide: Employment forecast
* Expect unemployment to average 8.5% this year, down from forecast of 8.9%. Expect decrease to 6.5% in 2021 and then to 3.6 in 2025
* Slide: WA economic recovery above average
* We bottomed out in April and are better in July by 7%
* Slide: Recovery by counties – shows differences, numbers do have errors, but you can see disproportionality by county
* -21% in one place to even positive numbers
* That means that there are differences in rent assistance needs
* Slide: Economic recovery varies by income
* Red line shows High Wage jobs, Green Muddle Wage and Blue Low Wage
* Shows that red recovered okay, middle, not so bad, low wage is down 20%
* Data is really confusing – you see how some can see a recovery and a lot of people do not see a recovery
* Slide: Housing Prices in WA – has been increasing this whole time
* Slide: Central Puget Sound, Seattle and Spokane – rent has been going up this whole time
* Main point is to show Low Wage recovery is much lower
* Q: I may be early on this, but what specific outreach is being done specifically to the Black community for these funds, knowing the needs you mentioned for the community.  - Chris Lovings
* A: I don’t want to pretend that we have this where we need it to be, but we do have requirements that 5% at least be contracted to groups that are governed by and serve marginalized communities
* Performance targets re: Black and other marginalized communities
* It’s up to counties to get these numbers
* Some counties have a good relationship with these groups and some doesn't
* Our goal is to see successes and to help that to teach us how to make this equity work better across the state
* Q: If there is currently about $100 million a month in unpaid rent each month, how much each month was unpaid pre-pandemic?
* A: 1/3-½ depending on how you measure it
* Q: Do you think rent is going up to cover the costs that the gov's order has caused?
* A: Rachael – that is exactly why we're advocating so forcefully for significant rent assistance that will have to come at from the federal level if we're going to get anywhere near the need of 100 million dollars a month
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| 10:2010 min | Rolling out the $40 million Washington Immigrant Relief Fund | Monserrat Padilla, Washington Immigrant Solidarity Networkmonserrat@waisn.org  | * Presenting about the $40 million relief fund
* First sharing why WISA network started and where they are heading
* Network came together shortly after election results in 2016 with intention to bring research together and strategize to shift narratives across the state
* Membership of organizations and individuals
* Intersections of LGBTQ, faith, labor, multigenerational, multi ethnic, intersectional perspective of immigrant communities to WA state to create systemic change
* Team of 15 staff and 125 volunteer leads
* Monserrat sharing story of mother’s move to the US and working in a sweatshop – influence keeping Monserrat motivated to do this work
* Network does deportation defense, responds to immigration activity – bread and butter of work across the state
* Also does youth immigrant organizing to share stories, especially LGBTQ immigrant youth
* Fair fight bond fund program gives community members access to financial support for release on bond from immigration detention system; reach out to WISA for access to bond money!
* COVID-19 crisis – black and brown communities disproportionately impacted, safety net gaps spiraled communities to economic crisis, and racist rhetoric targeted Asian and Pacific Islander community
* Threefold response – 1. expand healthcare access for undocumented and immigrant communities, 2. continuing rapid response and deportation defense, and 3. Working on a campaign to both find a “band aid solution” and work towards a permanent solution to expand health care and unemployment insurance to undocumented workers
* Working on this campaign since April; expanding beyond King County to entire state
* In March, began to receive over 15,000 hotline calls for community need for resources for rental assistance and food; worked to assure rental assistance funds available for undocumented community
* Eligibility no longer an issue for most rental assistance or food banks for people who are undocumented; luckily people were not turned away
* Launched a campaign to expand rental assistance and benefits available for undocumented communities especially knowing there was no real vehicle to get money out into communities; worked to create a system to get applications from undocumented communities and get them state funding, really to get cash out to communities
* Where to access information about WISA – 1-844-724-3737
* WA Immigrant Relief Fund won in July ($40 million) was a result of communities of color organizing and confronting power - 30 million will be awarded to individuals, one-time awards of $1,000 for 30,000 individuals; working with 85 org partners to do outreach, eligibility, screening and app assistance across the state
* Eligibility criteria – WA state resident, 18 years old, hardship due to pandemic, ineligible due to immigration status to receive federal stimulus or unemployment insurance
* $1,000 max per adult or $3,000 max per household
* Newly formed steering committee of those directly impacted, will be announced on oct 15th
* Applications will open up October 19th! Currently in big push to get ready
* Starting October 26th will be awarding recipients
* Not first come first serve; instead looking at biggest need based on applications
* Communities can stay updated by signing up for text system (text RELIEF to 79606)
* Application requirements just approved by state – present residence identity document (WA state ID, or other low-barrier documents like passport + proof of residency; letters from landlord, teacher, priest, or community member verifying residency can count; templates for verification letters available)
* Will have a training and toolkit available for assisting with applications
* Fighting to raise more money for this project
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| 10:3010 min | Update on the budget and legislative session, plus how advocates can play a key role in protecting budget cuts | Rep. Nicole Macri, 43rd Legislative District | * Rep. Macri has been working a lot on housing instability issues during the pandemic and before. Thank you to Monserrat – to have the advocacy win on this program and then get an implementation plan off the ground in just weeks is amazing! Commerce has been a great partner in getting funds out the door through ERAP as well.
* We’ve demonstrated we can mobilize quickly to support residents in WA who are in need of assistance.
* When Tedd talked about projected need, he noted that it depends what happens - $600m difference between high and low projections. Hard to manage that uncertainty in creating the state budget.
* Big question marks for the 2021 session. Must address big revenue shortfalls, protect existing services, and address new needs that have arisen or been further illuminated by the crisis.
* Revenue forecast gives us a sense of where forecasted tax collections are relative to what the legislature passed. In June, a $9B shortfall was projected over the next 3 years, but Sept brought a more positive forecast showing only a $4B shortfall.
* In Nov, uncertain what forecast may be – dependent on factors like supplemental federal unemployment benefits, etc.
* We do have rainy day funds – set aside every biennial budget. We expect over the next 3 years if we spend down all rainy day funds, will have $1.5B shortfall to maintain current services in the budget – which does nothing to address emerging/further illuminated needs, which fall into 4-5 categories:
* 1) Public Health
* 2) Childcare
* 3) Rent assistance
* 4) Health coverage – with loss of employment, thousands in WA have lost their health coverage. Lowest income are most impacted, particularly true for undocumented people who aren’t eligible for state Medicaid coverage.
* 5) Support for undocumented and non-eligible immigrant residents who aren’t eligible for federal supports.
* Support for these emerging needs are critical, in addition to protecting existing services.
* Strong call this session not to make the same mistakes of the last recession with austerity cuts.
* The recovery is not even – it's a tale of two states. For moderate & upper income households, many are bouncing back. For lowest-income households, things are only getting worse.
* Most legislators don’t interact with extremely low income individuals in their daily life, and because of the pandemic legislators are getting out into their communities less. So voices of advocates are imperative.
* In order to both protect services and have any hope of addressing emerging needs, we must look at increased tax revenue for the state. Must set expectation that legislators tax wealthy corporations and people to have an equitable response. We will have to say this again and again this session.
* A lot of companies have high-paid lobbyists who are in the ears of lawmakers. Organizing and sending repeated messages to lawmakers is key. Rep Macri has never received too many messages from advocates – don't worry about overdoing it. Persistence is not problematic and it’s not too early to start. Encourage advocates to reach out to their lawmakers to let them know we care and are tracking these issues.
* WA state is fortunate to have one of the strongest eviction protection policies during the pandemic, which is a direct result of advocacy with the Governor’s office.
* The Housing Alliance is organizing a sign-on campaign for organizations to adopt a statement in support of progressive revenue. If you’re on the board of a nonprofit, please reach out to John at johns@wliha.org for more information.
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| 10:4015 min | Housing Alliance legislative priorities for the 2021 session | Michele Thomas, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance | * Slides
* Running low on time – will provide key highlights on priorities and census data – encourage you to look over later and reach out
* Had extensive listening tours and meetings this summer and fall, survey that over 350 people responded to, brought draft agenda to Public Policy Committee then to board
* Legislative session likely to be entirely virtual – less capacity than normal year – we were urged by lawmakers to prioritize key “go home” issues
* Current stage: drafts. After board looked at it, we’re sending it back out into community for last feedback to check it’s addressing the most urgent issues
* Invest $250 mil. For Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve affordable housing statewide
* Statewide protections against discriminatory and arbitrary evictions
* Increase state resources to prevent and end homelessness: significantly increase the state’s document recording fee
* Protect against any cuts to affordable housing, homelessness, and related human services programs by passing significant new progressive revenue
* Additional Lead Agenda issues: ban discrimination based on prior criminal record, foreclosure prevention, support racial and/or immigrant rights ask if appropriate and asked to do so, prevent expansion of Multi-family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program without requiring deeper affordability, etc., support state Health Care Authority’s ask for Foundation Community Asks renewal authority and state funding match
* Support Agenda: will have questionnaire out in couple of weeks, you can propose issues
* Pulse data: 114,087 renters (70% of responders) who answered survey were unable to pay. 127,343 (7%) of homeowners who answered surveys were unable to pay.
* Context for racial disproportionality: structural racism. Households of color, especially black and indigenous households, are more likely to be renters. COVID-19 economic downturn disproportionately hit BIPOC and Latino/Latinx households, impacting expenses
* See slides
* 7% white home owners vs. 14% black home owners unable to pay mortgage
* Debt an ongoing concern: first 2 weeks of September, more renters relying on credit card to make ends meet – goes down recently but still 10% using to meet basic needs, a concerning number
* Many of those who lack confidence in ability to pay next month’s rent are really relying on credit card debt to meet basic needs
* Will have long-term effect on renters in WA state
* Q: how much an increase are looking at for the document recording fee?
* A: We are still working on that. It will be significant though and should be nailed down in the next couple of weeks.
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| 10:5510 min | Updates on HUD's most recent disparate impact rule, making it harder to challenge systemic racism in housing | Eric Dunn, National Housing Law Project | * HUD’s theory of enforcing anti-discrimination laws including Fair Housing Laws, often the people engaging in the discrimination are not saying that they are doing this directly, but instead have rules and policies that make it a barrier to housing
* Courts have said that if a housing provider, or housing related organization, tenant screening services, etc. If they are excluding members of a protected class that you don’t have to prove intentional discrimination. You just have to show they have this policy and that there is a better policy that will not discriminate
* Challenged at Supreme Court and survived, but it’s really critical that people have this ability
* The Trump administration decided to try to undermine this. And under the Obama administration after the Supreme Court case I mentioned inclusive communities case. The Obama administration had actually codified the legal standards for this theory into what they call the discriminatory effects rule.
* Ben Carson HUD has re-written this that makes it impossible to bring up these claims
* People have an opportunity to comment on what they think of this
* HUD takes this into consideration then final rule comes in
* Final now in – you have to now have statistical analysis, and brings more deterrents to challenging discriminatory policies
* ex. Criminal history screening
* Black people and Latinx people have historically had more arrests and convictions even if white people have the same number
* Housing looks at these criminal records
* Now you can’t just show this – you have to show that this is true in that particular housing environment
* Deters people from bringing up these claims
* Also, computer decision models to see if you are approved or denied
* Original rule says that there is no discrimination, decision models have to have evidence that they are predictive and accurate
* Now no requirement that there has to be evidence; so you can program computers to discriminate
* There have been claims under homeowner’s insurance places
* Regulation has been challenged in courts and more challenges to come
* This regulation has been put into effect so late, that the new administration could reverse this rule so a lot will rely on this election
* Rachael – many attacks on fair housing from this administration
* Q: Anything that folx can do to support this? Take action locally?
* A: Lawsuit filed already surprised advocates – so making any additional points that people aren’t already making
* WA has a good anti-discrimination law that's better than the federal law, though interpretation isn’t always best – state regulations would be helpful to spare WA from the harsh effects this policy will have
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| 11:0510 min | Q&A | * [didn’t have time for this, answered questions throughout]
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| 11:15 | Wrap-up & Adjourn | * Events coming up:
* Marc Dones from National Innovation Service will be talking about organizing to defund the police and shift funding to services that make communities safer, Oct 26 at noon. Will be joined by (missed name).
* Next Wed: Learn at Lunch webinar on strategic advocacy. There will be 5 total in our fall series. Registration link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIpcumurjoiHNAZFbF2e2KdhvcRVH7AQgBd
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