Weekly COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call Notes

Wednesday, January 6, 10:00-11:15am via Zoom

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|  | Topic | Speaker | Notes |
| 10:00 | Welcome & Settle in | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * + [Otter.ai transcript available here](https://otter.ai/u/AbErS_H_BHowLw8TofQz7Ndrn0k?f=oln)   + Zoom meetings every other Friday with legislative updates and federal advocacy – starting next week, you will get an invitation in your inbox!   + [You can directly register here](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0kd--orzotGNMpScqiad9fXXodyd7awmF4) |
| 10:05 | Washington’s extended eviction moratorium | Patricio Marquez, Attorney General’s office | * + Proclamation issued through December 31st - has been extended to 11:59PM March 31st   + Governor’s office created new exemption from prohibition against issuing eviction notices – does not apply to emergency shelters where housing is based on compliance with supportive services program   + Gov. Inslee wants to continue to provide rental assistance through state and additional CARES Act funding   + Allowable communication: clarifies that this includes efforts to coordinate with residents in the application for any type of rent assistance   + Only new additional paragraph – extend state eviction rent assistance program, anticipate additional federal funding – goal that landlords be able to independently apply without resident needing to seek assistance   + Q: Most shelters in King County and greater Seattle Area operate under state and county Housing First program models, how does the eviction moratorium account for this?   + A: Only designed for emergency shelter programs where there is a condition of participating in program to stay there. If there isn’t such a requirement, then such a shelter wouldn’t be covered.   + Q: Zero accountability for shelter operations turning clients onto the street – what about resources for vulnerable adults being turned out of housing. What is available?   + A: Our position is that they’re protected by proclamation, we would intervene to keep them housed unless operator could meet one of the exceptions. Individuals who have become unhoused since and don’t have a place to stay – proclamation doesn’t really provide any mechanism to connect individuals with housing. We recognize need for additional services – we do our best to direct them to other resources in the area, but being able to identify and provide housing resources is beyond purview of resources at our disposal.   + Q: Does the moratorium cover someone in a condo? I know a woman in her 80s on a fixed income who owns a condo. The property manager is raising the dues for which she does not have the money. Is she at risk of eviction if she cannot pay the increase? Who can I talk to about this? I do not want her to become homeless.   + A: Moratorium covers renters, not homeowners. There was a separate emergency proclamation that covers assessment of late fees, could be of help. Does not protect from having to make payments but does prohibit assessment of late fees for inability to do so.   + A (Rachael Myers): Washington Homeownership Resource Center may be another helpful resource to look into.   + Q: I have some questions about the landlord's responsibility to offer a payment plan. After the moratorium is up will the landlord be required to offer a payment plan within a certain amount of time before their ability to evict or send a debt to collections expires?   + A: Moratorium indicates that before landlord can go forward with any action seeking to collect, they must be able to prove to court they offered reasonable payment plan resident refused or didn’t comply with. It would be useful for legislature to put framework in place at the earliest opportunity for after the moratorium ends.   + Q: What will the AG office's role be in enforcing the moratorium after the end of the ban on evictions?   + A: Nothing formalized yet. Once we come towards the end we will need to come up with a plan. Unlikely that when the moratorium ends is the day we close our online complaint form and phone line. Expecting a transitional period |
| 10:25 | Department of Commerce updates | Ted Kelleher and Corina Grigoras, Department of Commerce | * + Many people working long hours in Dec. To get ERAP funding out   + Next phase of eviction rent assistance program     - Congress finally extended eligibility of funding for this program; was flexible funding that governor had discretion over, initially 100 million and later 110 million     - Extended contracts through June 30     - Most counties had shut down accepting applications because money is spent out     - Biggest news – new federal funding passed by congress. A little over 500 million dollars. This is specifically for rent assistance, not flexible funding, with broad outlines of guidelines from the federal government. Waiting for treasury to see where federal guidance comes down to craft state program, don’t have a timeline for this yet. Funding can go directly to local jurisdictions with population more than 200,000 but most funding at the state level.     - Governor’s budget proposes 164 million dollars a year, could see first piece of this in January.     - Realistically, earliest we could see money in ERAP would be this month, but that’s optimistic.     - Multiple bills for additional funding for rental assistance and eviction prevention.     - Waiting for federal guidance and conversations with you all to decide how federal funds should be dropped into ERAP or other programs     - Want help from you all on capacity in general. Homeless crisis response system, staff and orgs who have been managing this fund and other funding, have spent 500% more monthly than last year. Think about any org that has had to scale up 500%. Probably not sustainable. On top of that, preliminary data show significant reduction in number of people living outside receiving rental assistance, maybe because people have been reassigned to prevent evictions. We really don’t want in the middle and longer term to degrade the capacity of orgs to work with people living outside.     - Federal funds are available through December 2021 and will be another increase in spending. Think about doubling 500% increase we are at now, and adding 140%. We need to dig in to thinking about what does it mean to get to that level. Time and a place for working long hours, but not sustainable or healthy. How do we get through the marathon of 2021 in a way that’s healthy and supports everything?   + Eviction moratorium – governor has updated and some counties have models for how tenants and landlords now can initiate this process.     - Initiatives out there to do some follow up about the program, in particular with by and for orgs around racial equity and what we can do better in the next round.   + Questions for Ted:     - Funds available to migrant workers or folks who are undocumented? -- yes, with no danger of public charge     - Does rent assistance include rapid rehousing rent assistance? --no, specifically eviction rent assistance. We know this is an issue. Good news is there is other federal funding, emergency solutions grant, for this. But many counties have not been able to get into the spending of this because of capacity issues. Need to figure out how to use this to serve people living outside, expand shelters, etc.     - Is there a way we can get a visual aid for this conversation, and sources of funding? Percentages? Targeted programs? There’s a lot of momentum in the state to move toward more universal programs. How can we move from this piecemeal targeted approach to putting keys in people’s hands? This is what we’ve seen as housing providers – we can fund all these different line items but we can’t get keys into people’s hands.       * There are some internal charts we can share. There are huge advantages to universal programs, for sure. In a resource-constrained environment you end up with targeted programs. The larger the resource, the less narrow the targeting.   + Corina Grigoras – most recent round of housing trust fund awards     - Good news! We worked really hard advocating for funding in the HTF last year and will again this year.     - Have been having record breaking appropriations and funding. $242 million dollars     - Busy this biennium with different funding rounds and requirements for all the funding. 2020 funding round we received a request for 207 million, only had 95 million.     - Able to award 97 million dollars, helping develop about 1700 units across the state. Have been working with the alliance and others to see how we can make larger investments in rural areas. We are investing about 43% of competitive awards to rural areas. Do this through making deeper investments in those areas – state is covering a larger portion of the cost in those areas because they don’t have access to other resources like tax credits or capital. Closely coordinating to other funders like housing finance commission and city and counties.     - Award list is posted on our page if folks would like to see it.     - Q: repeat the number of requests for funding vs. Number that applied? --82 requests, 37 fulfilled. Very competitive round.     - Q: no seasonal farmworker projects awarded this year? Speak to that? --had one coming in but application was not very competitive. More than half of the projects remained on the table. There are no bad projects out there, some the team felt they were more ready. Typically the trust fund is the last funding before the projects get tax credits.     - Governor budget proposal for the trust fund --       * 3 main sections for capital budget trust fund: 240 million, with priorities for certain populations. 20 million of this focused on preservation, 220 million for new development. Section proposed for enhanced shelters – 50 million. 10 million set aside for affordable housing at risk of losing affordability. 70 million would be dedicated for acquisition of hotels and motels to quickly transform them into emergency shelters or supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness. All in all 360 million proposed for capital budget.     - Is there anything specific to farmworker housing in governor’s budget? -- not a specific target, but talk of prioritizing seasonal farmworkers and other populations |
| 10:45 | Federal updates: New relief package and next steps, FEMA reimbursement for non-congregate shelter | Kim Johnson and Noah Patton, National Low Income Housing Coalition | * Kim Johnson – Policy Analyst * Relief package passed over the break, it was finally signed into law including 25B in Rental Assistance and an extension of the eviction moratorium. That 25B won’t be enough so we are seeing it as a down payment and will come back to the table when Biden comes in so that people aren’t evicted during the pandemic * 25B through the coronavirus relief fund * of the total amount of assistance 400 million will be allocated to US territories and 800 million to tribal communities, those remaining funds are going to be distributed within 30 days to states and cities with populations of 200,000 people or more. Each state is expected to receive a minimum of $200 million. * Posted to chat: https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Estimated-Coronavirus-Relief-Fund-Allocations.pdf * Assistance can be for up to 12 months and states can give 6 months, after 3 months then landlord or tenant can reapply * This is for back rent and forward rent but back rent has to be paid first * A lot of big questions still remain, waiting for guidance from the Treasury * Cities and states can make payments directly to people to give to landlord or utilities * 80% AMI for federal * 50% AMI for states and localities * And if income determinations are made based on an applicant's monthly income, the state or locality must re determine eligibility after that three month period. Under the bill households are eligible for emergency rental assistance funds, if one or more individuals, one have qualified for unemployment benefits or can attest in writing that they are experiencing a reduction in household income that they have incurred significant costs or experienced other financial hardships due directly or indirectly, to the pandemic to that they can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability and again that they have an income below 80% AMI. * People not documented can receive assistance * Landlords can apply on behalf of their tenants, they must provide paperwork to tenants * Treasure released today first round of guidance of CRF, stating the same as before with deadline for applications for eligible entities by January 12, 2021 at midnight EST * Reporting requirements attached – they need quarterly reports including # of HH served, acceptance rates, avg amount of fund provided to HH and income level of groups * Must be disaggregated by race, gender, etc. To be sure it is distributed equitably * We will continue to push for another extension of the moratorium – confident they will offer this, right not 1/31/21 * Tenants still need to take steps to take advantage of eviction moratorium – for federal only, not for Washington * the bill established a permanent floor for the LIHTC tax credit for folks who work with LIHTC * When will we hear from Treasury – unsure, we put out questions. Current administration might want to offer input, first, unsure * <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/emergency-rental-assistance-program> * Rachael posted: Cities and counties in WA that are eligible to receive funds directly: * Benton County * Clark County * King County * Kitsap County * Pierce County * Snohomish County * Spokane County * Thurston County * Whatcom County * Yakima County * Seattle * Spokane * Tacoma * Rachael: Ted said earlier, most of the funds will go to the state but if these particular cities and counties, want to apply on their own, they have that ability and john you asked a question about could cities within a county administer funds on its behalf. I don't believe so I think those funds would then just go to the state. Ted or Kim any, any other answer am I wrong about that? * Ted – only 45% go to local jurisdiction if they apply * Rebecca Royce: Are there any advantages for applying directly for the funds in counties/cities that are eligible to apply directly? * Faster for cities to apply for these themselves, depends on internal workings and processes * Ted – a lot of states have two contracts, but in every case we will grant with every jurisdiction * Cities or counties with over 200K * Noah Patton - FEMA policy changes * Non-congregate sheltering and public reimbursement, shelters deconcentrated and moved to places like hotels, applying to FEMA for 75% of that, send an email to Noah for questions * Quest to expand that we’ve run into a lot of issues that FEMA’s requirement to receive reimbursement every 30 days, then tough to build out a program * Now when approval is give, that will last for the duration of the pandemic – good news * This has helped with non-congregate sheltering – it was a big lift * Still a reporting requirement, average length of stays, population type – exp. Homelessness vs. First responders * Excellent huge win! * When FEMA decides to end, the guidance requires regional admin provide 30 days notice - heads up has not panned out in the past so keep an eye out for that, reserve the right for a 30 day extension * CDBG – covid funds can be used as the 25% local portion of that cost * Utilize ESG for rehousing * <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/121620-Update-to-Non-Congregate-Sheltering-Delegation-of-Authority-Waiver-Memo.pdf> * Can housing agencies directly access this? * PHAs can apply, Noah will give list of eligible non-profits, most of what we’ve seen are city and state governments |
| 11:00 | State legislative updates | Michele Thomas, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance | * Session starts on Monday! There’s a whole new world of possibility for lawmakers to advance policy and make significant budget investments to meet most urgent needs in communities. * We will have calls every other Fri starting Jan 15 at 1pm that are open to all. They’ll be similar to these calls, but a heavier focus on state legislative session but also COVID and federal assistance. * We are thrilled with Governor’s budget. The capital and operating budgets deeply center investments in affordable housing and homelessness. It’s not a coincidence. Direct result of your advocacy. We hope you feel proud of that. * Aside from the $360M in funding in the capital budget that Corina already covered, there’s an additional $100M including $5M for the Landlord Mitigation Fund established through the passage of the source of income discrimination protections a few years back, $10M for cleanup of toxic sites to be turned into affordable housing, $10M for utility connection fee reduction grants, and funds for weatherization. Operating budget also includes rental assistance, though we have another plan for how best to fund that outside the operating budget. But he includes resources for homeless youth & young adult program, Increased funding for Housing & Essential Needs, and $35M for the Home Security Fund. * Overall a phenomenal budget, but the legislature needs to be pushed to follow the Governor’s lead and adopt these deep investments in the capital and operating budget. Decisions will be made early in session about what the big priorities will be, and how they will be funded. Imperative to get messages to lawmakers now about making these issues a top priority. We’ll send out an action alert today that we hope everyone will take action on. * The most recent budget forecast showed a much smaller shortfall than originally projected. The budget stabilization account (“rainy day fund”) has $2B, enough to cover the shortfall, but we want to push them to raise new revenue to meet emerging needs during COVID. Because the forecast has improved, it makes it harder to push for progressive revenue, but it’s still critically important. * We’ll have a long legislative session this year, from Jan 11-April 25. The state budget will go into effect July 1. Because session is virtual, lawmakers will have less capacity to pass bills, which means we’re pushing for a fewer policy bills than normal. Our priorities are centered on advancing equity and pandemic response. We’ll be working to make sure lawmakers understand how those are connected this session. * We’re thrilled that good news is coming from Georgia. Biden has an aggressive housing plan that will be easier to realize as a result of the Senate runoff election results. $500M in new relief package is welcome, but not enough to meet current rental arrears. The state will still have a significant role to meet need in WA. Pulse survey shows 175,717 people in WA are currently behind on rent. * Our legislative priorities this year include:     + $100 document recording fee increase for homelessness prevention, consolidated homelessness grant, rapid rehousing type programs, and expanding universe of who’s eligible in light of the pandemic. We met with sponsors Rep Ormsby and Sen Robinson to finalize the details, and the bill will be dropped soon. It will need a lot of advocacy across the state to pass because of significant opposition in past to increasing the document recording fee.   + Eviction reform bills:     - Rep Macri re-introducing just cause to take protections to all renters in WA. Clearly connected to rental assistance, need to ensure LL can’t turn around and kick someone out.     - Sen Kuderer working on eviction reform package that will include a right to counsel for low-income renters in eviction court. |
| 11:10 | Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Days | Caroline Lopez, Housing Alliance | * #HHAD2021 Information and Registration Link: [www.bit.ly/HHAD2021](http://www.bit.ly/HHAD2021) * 100% virtual * Just wanted to say thank you to all the organizers and advocates on this call! Excited that you might be joining us at HHAD 2021. Will be over 1 week’s time, will have a couple hours on Monday Feb. 8th with welcome and advocacy workshops, and usual rally will be about an hour on that Friday. In between, will have legislative district meetings, probably about 15-20 minutes each. So we really need to prepare for those. * The week before HHAD will have a half hour meeting with every legislative district with their LD Leads * If you register as soon as possible, you will get your personal schedule with your legislative district two weeks in advance, so you can reschedule your meetings around that. * Email will come out tomorrow with more details. |