



Joint Industry Statement on Universal Housing Vouchers

Safe, secure, and stable housing is as essential to America's social safety net as are Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare. Housing stability is central to improving life outcomes and economic mobility for low-income Americans. However, only one in five low-income households that are eligible to receive housing assistance can be served by existing programs due to limited funding. The pandemic has reinforced that rental assistance, such as the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, is critical to ensuring housing stability and managing sudden losses in income. Just as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are structured to be available to all who are eligible, rental assistance must be too. Expansion of the voucher program offers a proven and effective approach to scale universal housing assistance to address housing instability and prevent homelessness in America.

Housing Choice Vouchers are a proven source of permanent housing stability. They are highly effective at providing long-term financial stability to formerly homeless populations and others experiencing housing instability. A recent HUD study found that offering families a permanent housing voucher resulted in greater housing and family stability compared to short-term interventions. Furthermore, a recent study from Columbia University found that expanding housing vouchers to all eligible households could help reduce poverty by 9.3 million people as well as reduce racial disparities in poverty.

Vouchers are also frequently paired with supportive services to offer comprehensive assistance to individuals with complex mental and physical health conditions. Public housing authorities are uniquely positioned to aid low-income families in their challenges to regain employment and support children's virtual learning because of their partnerships with nonprofit and government service providers that focus on education, health, and employment. Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies recently reported on the critical role that service coordinators in publicly funded housing have played in providing food and supplies, assisting with technology, and combatting resident anxiety and loneliness.

Housing Choice Vouchers are a proven and effective rental assistance delivery system to scale universal housing assistance because they can be quickly distributed through the existing network of 2,200 state and local housing agencies that administer vouchers in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Housing authorities are trusted experts and partners in their local rental markets, have been administering the voucher program for nearly 50 years and are accountable to local and federal oversight and operate with significant public input. With the proper funding, housing authorities have the capacity for a rapid expansion.

Housing vouchers power local communities. Landlords, many of whom operate as a small business, understand that the voucher program is a guaranteed, reliable income source and provides the benefit of long-term stability. PHAs have been using the additional funding and regulatory relief provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to expedite administrative processes most often cited by landlords as reasons for preferring unassisted tenants. With this funding, PHAs have also been able to offer incentives and support to increase landlord participation in the HCV program.

We must strive to be a nation that believes that all people deserve the security that comes from having a home. Housing Choice Vouchers are the path to achieving this vision.