NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

Memo TO Members

Volume 21, Issue 37
September 26, 2016

In This Issue:

NLIHC News
NLIHC Membership Month is Almost Over: Join NLIHC Today

This is the final week of NLIHC's Membership Month. We welcome and thank our more than 60 new NLIHC members who joined us and our many existing members this month. Your membership is essential to helping NLIHC carry out our mission.

Not a member?

Please join NLIHC today and spread the word to others. Visit our Membership page at: http://nlihc.org/membership/nmm

The membership process is quick and easy. Join today and you will be eligible to win some great gifts in our final drawing on **September 30.** Up to 6 new members will win a package of an NLIHC t-shirt, tote bag, and water bottle, and one will a free three-night double room at the Washington Court Hotel for the 2017 NLIHC Policy Forum taking place in Washington DC April 2-4, 2017 (a $927 value).

Already a member?

For existing members, Membership Month is an opportunity to reaffirm your commitment to ending housing poverty and homelessness by encouraging your family members, friends, and colleagues to join NLIHC.

Here are a few ways you can help:

- **Recruit Others:** Recommend NLIHC membership to your family, friends and colleagues. All new and renewing members during the month of September may be eligible to win some great gifts**.**
- **Change your Twitter and Facebook Background:** Let everyone in your social media network know that you support NLIHC's work and that membership is important to you.
- **Show Your Support via Social Media:** Use our sample tweets and Facebook posts to encourage those in your social network to #JoinNLIHC.

To download membership graphics and to access sample social media messages visit: www.nlihc.org/membership/nmm

Should you need additional assistance, please contact NLIHC's Field team at: outreach@nlihc.org

Congress
House Committee Holds Hearing on Improving Voucher Mobility

The House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance held a hearing on September 21 to explore ways to make the housing voucher program more efficient and to increase upward economic mobility. Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and the GOP anti-poverty task force had previously identified the need to enhance the portability of housing assistance vouchers and reform the "fragmented" system of thousands of public housing agencies (PHAs) "to encourage recipients to move to areas with more affordable housing, education, or job opportunities." Witnesses offered a variety of proposals, including encouraging public housing agencies to form consortia, applying small area fair market rents, and deregulation.

Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) said that addressing the affordable housing crisis is one of the most important things Congress should be doing right now. Mr. Ellison pointed to statistics showing that the majority of low income renters spend more than half of their income on housing. He said that while he supports proposals to make programs more efficient, doing so will not address the fact that there simply is not enough affordable housing. “Do you know how much the mortgage interest deduction program costs? Seventy billion dollars. Do you know how much HUD’s total budget is? A lot less. We spend over $100 billion on middle and upper income people, giving them government money for housing. But we don’t do nearly as much for people who desperately need housing and don’t have the same level of support.”

Barbara Sard of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities discussed how living in low-poverty neighborhoods helps families increase their earnings and climb the economic ladder to prosperity. But because the system of PHAs is so fragmented, she said, families with vouchers are largely unable to access areas of opportunity. More than 1,500 PHAs administer vouchers in metropolitan areas. Typically, one agency administers the voucher program in the central city and other PHAs serve the surrounding suburban communities. Ms. Sard said that because of this fragmentation, families are less likely to get useful information about opportunities in other communities and are more likely to have trouble using their vouchers when trying to move to another PHA’s jurisdiction. She also explained that fragmentation increases administrative and oversight costs.

Ms. Sard recommended that PHAs be encouraged to consolidate or form regional consortia to administer the voucher program. She also urged Congress to fund a voucher mobility demonstration proposed by the Obama Administration and included in the Senate’s FY17 Transportation-HUD spending bill.

Deborah Thrope of the National Housing Law Project explained that, even after some families receive vouchers and try to move to areas of opportunity, they often end up moving back to low-poverty neighborhoods. They often lose their vouchers when they are unable to find a landlord willing to rent to them. “In many places, the value of the voucher does not reflect market rents, making it difficult if not impossible for families to find a place they can afford.” Ms. Thrope recommended that HUD use small area fair market rents (SAFMRs) that better reflect market rents in high-cost neighborhoods to determine the value of vouchers. She added that protections should be put in place to protect current voucher holders who could be negatively impacted by SAFMRs.

Both Ms. Sard and Ms. Thrope spoke against a proposal to deregulate small PHAs. The “Small Public Housing Agency Opportunity Act of 2016” (H.R. 4816), introduced by Representative Steve Palazzo (R-MS), would eliminate important safeguards for tenants and likely have the unintended consequence of increasing costs to the government.

NLIHC also urged the Subcommittee to reject H.R. 4816 in a written statement for the record. “The bill needlessly complicates program administration and diminishes federal oversight by creating special rules for small agencies, counter to this Committee’s goals and prior legislative efforts. NLIHC appreciates the Subcommittee’s recent bipartisan work to pass H.R. 3700, the “Housing Opportunity through Modernization Act,” which promises to streamline administrative burdens for all PHAs, regardless of size, when it is fully implemented.”

NLIHC also offered several policy recommendations, including:

- Consolidating PHAs’ administration of vouchers;
- Funding the voucher mobility demonstration proposed by the Obama Administration;
- Encouraging HUD to adopt SAFRMs and change its rescreening policies for voucher holders;
- Ensuring federal resources are directed towards producing deeply affordable housing in all communities; and
- Increasing needed investments in affordable housing for the poor by reforming the mortgage interest deduction.

Watch the archived webcast and read witness testimony at: http://bit.ly/2cqqqv6

Read NLIHC's statement for the record at: http://bit.ly/2cwNtl2

Senate Committee Discusses HUD Inspection Fraud and Landlord Negligence

The Senate Banking Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development held a hearing on September 22 concerning negligence, health concerns, and fraudulent inspections by Global Ministries Foundation (GMF) and HUD. In 2015 Eureka Gardens, an apartment complex in Florida, passed its July HUD inspection with a score of 91%. However, reports indicated the housing complex was not fit for human habitation.

Tracey Grant of the Eureka Gardens Tenants' Association explained that the complex is plagued by mold, gas leaks, and lead poisoning, and has not had proper maintenance since its construction 50 years ago. HUD has been aware of these issues since 2013 but has so far not given the building a failing grade.

Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) testified about the deplorable living conditions they saw when they visited the apartments. To address the issue, they are planning to introduce a "Housing Accountability Act" to create independent oversight of HUD inspections while prosecuting landlords who fail to comply with maintenance orders. Although their criticisms were primarily directed at GMF, their concerns extend to HUD for enabling fraud and abuse and neglecting to hold GMF accountable.

Dr. Edgar Olsen of the University of Virginia testified that the Housing Choice Voucher program is the only solution to fixing HUD's inspection issues. Other witnesses and senators disagreed with this position, including Vincent O'Donnell, an affordable housing consultant, and Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), who pointed out that voucher holders face displacement and discrimination in many cities across the country.

Watch the Senate Banking Subcommittee hearing at: http://bit.ly/2cOvkhU

Senator Wyden Proposes a Middle Income Housing Tax Credit Program

On September 22, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) released a discussion draft of legislation to create a new federal tax program. Senator Wyden's Middle Income Housing Tax Credit—modeled off of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit—is designed to provide incentives to developers who build or preserve rental housing affordable to households earning 100% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Wyden has invited stakeholders, members of Congress, federal officials and others to review the draft legislation and submit comments on a variety of issues, including the proposed income limits. All comments should be submitted to MIHTC@finance.senate.gov.

NLIHC is deeply concerned about this proposed legislation and will submit comments to Senator Wyden's office. While it is critical that Congress increases resources to address our nation's affordable housing crisis, new federal resource must be targeted to serve those with the greatest needs, families with extremely low incomes (ELI).

Instead, Senator Wyden's bill would serve families who, by all accounts, do not face significant challenges. The proposed Middle Income Housing Tax Credit program would target significant new resources to moderate income households. In Oregon, for every 100 moderate-income families, there are 103 apartments that are affordable and available to them. In contrast, for every 100 ELI families in Oregon, there are just 22 apartments that are affordable and available to them. Four out of five ELI families in Oregon pay more than half of their income on rent, compared to just 2% of moderate-income families. NLIHC's 2016 GAP Analysis report shows the same trends throughout the country.

A section-by-section summary of the draft bill and request for comment is available here: http://bit.ly/2dewmYk

NLIHC's Oregon Housing Needs Factsheet can be found here: http://bit.ly/2d3omqS

Congressman Introduces Disaster Tax Relief Bill, Includes Increased LIHTC Allocation

On September 22, Representative Charles Boustany (R-LA) introduced H.R. 6137, the Louisiana Flood and Storm Devastation Tax Relief Act of 2016, to provide victims of severe storms and flooding with tax relief as they recover from damage to their home and property.

For individuals, the bill temporarily suspends penalties for withdrawing funds from retirement accounts, allows partial expensing of demolition and clean-up costs, and allows those who wish to claim a casualty loss deduction the option to file amended tax returns for the previous three tax years.

For businesses, the legislation provides employees with a temporary, 30-day income exclusion for employer-provided reimbursement of temporary lodging, an allowance for qualified employers to claim the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and an extended 5-year carryback period for employers claiming Net Operating Losses resulting from this year's flooding events.

To help the rebuilding process, the bill also allows for an increase in the state's Low Income Housing Tax Credit ceiling allowance for rebuilding efforts in distressed areas, an additional allocation of New Market Tax Credits for disaster declared areas, and enhanced availability of tax-exempt private activity bonds to help incentivize public-private partnerships for rebuilding efforts.

For more information on H.R. 6137, see Representative Boustany's press release: http://bit.ly/2dkFYQB

Budget

On Brink of Government Shutdown, Senate Republicans Release CR Text, Include Emergency Funding for Louisiana Flood Recovery

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) was again forced to push back a procedural vote on a stopgap funding measure last week, after Senators remain unable to reach an agreement on how to fund the federal government. Congress now has less than a week to pass the measure, known as a Continuing Resolution (CR), before the last day of the fiscal year (September 30) to avert a government shutdown. Leader McConnell has rescheduled the vote for tomorrow afternoon.

Majority Leader McConnell unveiled the text of a CR last Thursday, which includes $500 million in emergency funding to help flood victims in Louisiana and other affected states. Several lawmakers had requested that the CR include emergency funding for Louisiana to help the state recover from severe flooding in August. The White House asked Congress to provide $2.6 billion in Disaster Recovery Community Development Block Grant funds. HUD reports that over 1,300 of their tenants have been displaced by the flooding, while the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has registered more than 144,000 people seeking disaster assistance. More than 145,000 homes are located in flood areas.

The CR also reduces funding levels with an across the board cut of 0.496%, with a number of exceptions. The CR includes a provision allowing the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to pay ongoing debt service for rental assistance contracts under the Section 514 and Section 516 multi-family direct loan programs.

The CR was met by immediate opposition from Democrats in both the House and Senate, as the bill does not provide funding to address the lead crisis in Flint and includes a policy rider related to campaign finance. The White House has also indicated the administration does not support the bill. White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said, "It's not at all clear to me [President Obama is] prepared to sign this bill."

Republicans argue that the situation in Flint was created by state and local governments and may not qualify for federal emergency aid that is often provided after natural disasters.

House Appropriations Committee Chair Harold Rogers (R-KY) stated, "While [a CR] is not the preferable way to fund the government, and there are several additional items I would have liked to see included, the bottom line is that it is essential that we keep the government open and provide these vital funds."

Senate Committee Discusses Alternatives to Place-Based Rental Assistance

The Senate Transportation-HUD (THUD) Appropriations Subcommittee held a hearing on September 21 to discuss ways to reduce costs in federal housing programs. At the center of the discussion was a proposal to convert public housing and project-based rental assistance into housing vouchers. Witnesses included San Diego Housing Commission President and CEO Richard Gentry, University of Virginia Professor of Economics and Public Policy Edgar Olsen, and Urban Institute Fellow and Director of Urban Policy Initiatives Erika Poethig.

Chairwoman Susan Collins (R-ME) began the hearing by expressing deep concern that rental assistance programs account for 84% of HUD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget and asking the witnesses about the effectiveness of the program.

Dr. Olsen argued for a complete conversion of project-based housing into housing vouchers. Ms. Poethig disagreed, stating that the housing market on its own cannot provide enough low-income rental homes for the new voucher holders who would flood the private housing market. Instead, she advocated for using housing vouchers to supplement project-based housing programs.

Mr. Gentry expressed concern about top-down federal policy decisions and advocated for local policymaking. He also stressed the importance of flexibility in low-income housing and in efforts to transform "passive clients into active consumers" by allowing families to choose between accepting project-based housing and housing vouchers.

Watch the Senate THUD Appropriations Subcommittee hearing at: http://bit.ly/2cCS99B

Could Budget Reform Lead To Fixing the Mortgage Interest Deduction?

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget hosted a Congressional briefing on September 19 related to reforming the federal budget process, with a keynote speech by Senate Budget Committee Chairman Mike Enzi (R-WY). Panelists included Charles Konigsberg from the Federal Budget Group, Roy Meyers from the University of Maryland Baltimore County, Dr. F. Stevens Redburn from George Washington University, and Ed Lorenzen from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Chairman Enzi kicked off the discussion by outlining his 10 recommendations for budget reform, which he released in July. These reforms include switching to a two-year budget, limiting the ability to filibuster or offer unrelated policy riders to the budget, eliminating the debt ceiling and making Continuing Resolutions automatic, moving to a portfolio-based budget instead of one by Department, and making budget resolutions binding on Congress, among others. Mr. Enzi also highlighted his "Penny Plan" to cut an additional 1% of federal spending each year until the federal budget is balanced.

The panel discussion focused on the need for a portfolio budgeting process. Dr. Redburn noted that with a portfolio approach, the Budget Committee could consider both tax expenditures and spending programs simultaneously and allow Congress to better prioritize federal spending across agencies. As an example, Dr. Redburn pointed to the mortgage interest deduction, which receives far more funding than HUD and, in his words, "skews heavily to wealthier people and protects special interests."

See more information regarding Chairman Enzi's budget proposals at: http://bit.ly/2cVBE5o

HUD

HUD Issues Interim Evaluation of RAD

HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research issued an interim evaluation of the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program (RAD). Because the demonstration is still in its early stages, the evaluation focused on the reasons public housing agencies (PHAs) chose certain public housing projects to convert to Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers (PBV) or Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). The study found that projects chosen for RAD conversion were more likely to have higher per-unit operating subsidies and lower per-unit expenses, and were not necessarily those with the greatest needs for capital improvements.

As part of the FY12 HUD appropriations act, Congress authorized RAD to help preserve and improve public housing. RAD allows PHAs to leverage Section 8 rental assistance contracts in order to raise private debt and equity for capital improvements for 185,000 public housing units.

The evaluation was conducted by Econometrica, the Urban Institute, and EMG Corporation. The team spoke with 100 staff members from dozens of PHAs.

The evaluation did not consider any issues pertaining to residents. Since the beginning of RAD, resident leaders and advocates have complained to HUD that it is extremely difficult to obtain basic information about proposals to convert their homes under RAD. The requirements that PHAs meet with residents twice before applying for RAD have often not been sufficiently substantive for residents to fully understand the ramifications of RAD conversions. Once a RAD conversion is approved by HUD, residents often are not kept informed about the conversion process. The interim evaluation claims that the impact on residents will be covered by the next phase of evaluation and reported in December 2018.

The evaluation found that PHAs are not necessarily proposing their neediest projects for RAD conversion. Instead, they are using RAD to convert projects across their portfolios with a wide range of capital needs, including projects with no capital needs. Many RAD projects for which transactions have closed are conversions to Section 8 that require no rehabilitation or new construction. Of the 185 closed transactions, 34 (18.4%) had no plans to use their financing to fund any rehabilitation or construction. PHAs often choose projects for RAD that lack significant capital needs because they are easier to close. These PHAs said they were interested in converting to Section 8 for the sake of better long-run project management. Some PHAs also said RAD could improve their overall administrative efficiency by putting all housing assets under a single subsidy program.

PHAs said they also considered the potential financing challenges when choosing a project for RAD, considering financing strategies most likely to be workable. They weighed how much debt a project could carry given its contract rents under Section 8, whether the project needed 4% or 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) equity, and the prospects for obtaining LIHTC financing. The evaluation noted that these criteria could result in PHAs rejecting projects with greater capital needs because of the difficulty in meeting financing challenges.

The report states that its most significant finding is that projects chosen for RAD conversion were more likely to have higher per-unit operating subsidies and lower per-unit expenses. Higher subsidies tend to equate to higher Section 8 contract rents, and higher rents and lower expenses would increase net operating income and hence the ability to borrow to make capital improvements.

Compared to non-RAD projects, RAD projects tended to have households with lower median incomes, greater rates of housing cost burden (percentage of income devoted to housing and utility expenses), and higher rates of overcrowding (percentage of households living in housing with more than one person per room). RAD projects also had a greater mix of larger units (as measured by the percentage of one or two-bedroom units), and they tended to be located in neighborhoods in metropolitan areas with lower rates of poverty (percentage of households living below the poverty threshold). The latter feature might have enhanced the ability to secure financing because of the relative stability anticipated by the lower levels of poverty.

PHAs reported appreciating Section 8 over public housing because Section 8 enabled them to use project resources more efficiently by managing their property according to commercial methods, such as building up project reserves to cover future capital needs. Some PHAs also perceived the benefit of simplifying their internal operations by consolidating their assets into a single program, Section 8, which has simpler reporting requirements than public housing. PHAs also liked that Section 8 allowed them to engage in more predictable long-term project planning because the Section 8 subsidy contract offers 15- to 20-year terms with a more reliable revenue stream.

HUD's *Interim Report: Evaluation of HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD)* is at: http://bit.ly/2dda7lz

More information about RAD is on page 4-13 of NLIHC's 2016 Advocates' Guide, http://bit.ly/22QZiEm, and on NLIHC's website at: http://bit.ly/1Yfa0E9

USDA

USDA Releases New Tool to Help Identify At-Risk Properties

USDA released a new tool on September 19 to help communities and advocates identify affordable housing developments at risk of leaving USDA's portfolio once the property's USDA loan matures. Once a USDA loan is paid in full, owners are under no obligation to maintain the properties as affordable housing, and tenants living in these properties will no longer be eligible for USDA rental assistance.

USDA estimates that 74 properties consisting of 1,788 apartments will leave their portfolio each year through 2027. At that time, losses are expected to increase significantly to 556 properties consisting of 16,364 apartments each year through 2032. Losses will peak in 2040 with an average loss of 22,500 apartments each year.

According to the Housing Assistance Council, USDA's portfolio includes nearly 14,000 properties and 416,000 apartments. On average, a household living in a USDA-financed property has an annual income of about $13,600. Two-thirds of these renters receive USDA Rental Assistance.

Advocates hope that this new tool will give nonprofit organizations and communities more time to develop plans to acquire and maintain the properties as affordable housing over the long term. But significant challenges remain, including lack of access to affordable financing.

USDA's Multifamily Housing Property Exit Data is at: http://bit.ly/29W4d49

Criminal Justice

No Vote on Criminal Justice Reform before Elections

Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) announced that the House will not take a vote on criminal justice reform before the November elections. So far, the House Judiciary Committee has approved several criminal justice reform bills, but it remains unclear whether these bills will reach the House floor during this congressional session. While Speaker Ryan has indicated that he may take up some of the bills during the lame duck session in November, other lawmakers are starting to look ahead to 2017.

NLIHC and other leaders are working to ensure that any comprehensive criminal justice reform legislation addresses the significant housing needs of formerly incarcerated people. As more formerly incarcerated individuals return to their communities, there is growing concern about how they will fare upon reentry.

Resources, especially for affordable housing, are already scarce in the low-income communities where formerly incarcerated persons typically return. Because of their criminal records, justice-involved individuals face additional barriers in accessing affordable housing, putting them at risk of homelessness and subsequent recidivism.

Research

Homelessness Prevention Programs Improve Outcomes and Save Money

A study published in *Science* by William Evans, James Sullivan, and Melanie Wallskog titled *The Impact of Homelessness Prevention Programs on Homelessness* finds that temporary financial assistance to families at imminent risk of homelessness reduces the likelihood that they will enter a homeless shelter by 76%. The benefits of the temporary financial assistance, including lower shelter costs, lower costs of other public services, and better educational and health outcomes, outweigh the costs.

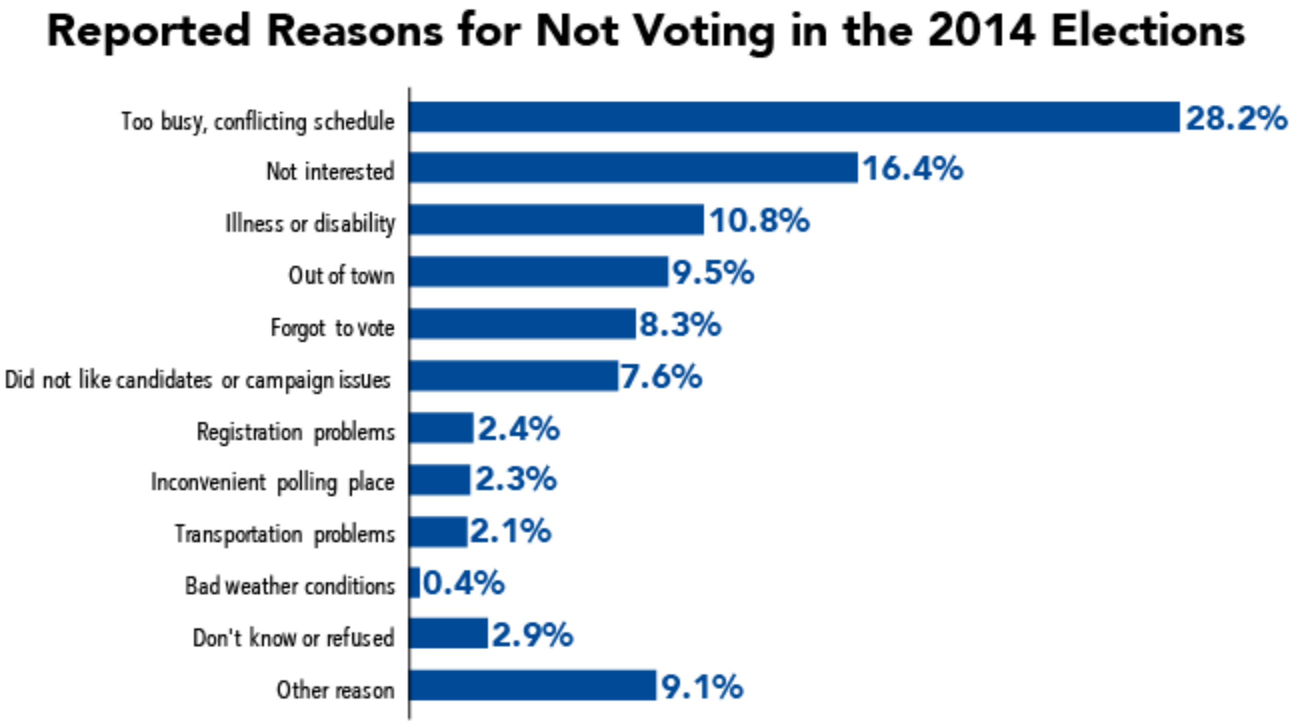
The study examined the shelter outcomes for 4,448 eligible callers to Chicago's Homelessness Prevention Call Center (HPCC) who requested assistance for rent or security deposits. Eligible callers had to demonstrate that they could be self-sufficient after the temporary assistance, have an eligible crisis like the loss of a job or a medical emergency, face imminent risk of homelessness, and be in a crisis that the temporary assistance could solve. HPCC referral specialists referred eligible callers to an appropriate agency that provides assistance. The availability homelessness prevention assistance fluctuates from day to day for a number reasons, including openings in counselors' schedules at local agencies and inconsistent or unpredictable funding streams. This fluctuation means that not all eligible callers received help. The authors compared the shelter outcomes for eligible callers who received assistance to those who did not.

Callers who received assistance were 76% less likely to enter a shelter within six months than those who didn't. The impact of temporary assistance was greater for individuals with lower-than-median incomes. These individuals were 88% less likely to enter a shelter than low income callers who did not receive help. Assistance did not have a statistically significant impact on shelter outcomes for higher-than-median income families.

The authors estimate that the cost for each homeless spell averted through temporary financial assistance was $10,300 per person, factoring in the operating costs of the call center and of other participating agencies and the financial assistance costs. The authors assert that these costs could be reduced if temporary assistance were better targeted to low income families who are in the greatest danger of homelessness. However, predicting which families will and will not become homeless without assistance is difficult. The cost of temporary financial assistance was outweighed by the benefits of lower shelter costs, lower costs of other public services, and better health and educational outcomes.

The Impact of Homelessness Prevention Programs on Homelessness is available at: http://bit.ly/2bu1sXN

Fact of the Week
Why People Fail to Vote



Source: November 2014 Current Population Survey

Housing and Elections
Five Ways to Take Action Between Now and the Election

U.S. Representatives and Senators are scheduled to return to their home districts and states between October 10 and November 11, but they may head back home as early as this week. Their return home provides affordable housing and community development organizations the opportunity to influence a number of critical issues before Congress and to help break through the noise of the presidential campaigns to make affordable housing an election issue.

To help advocates make full use of this time, NLIHC has created a Summer/Fall 2016 Advocacy Guide, outlining the five key ways organizations can take action between now and the November elections to advocate for the issues that are most important to their mission, the people they serve, and their community.

The advocacy guide covers ways you can help increase federal spending on key housing programs, expand and improve the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, ensure that housing needs are addressed in criminal justice reform, use NLIHC Voterization resources to engage voters and candidates, and support the Make Room campaign—an initiative to demand that Congress make affordable housing a top priority.

See NLIHC's Summer/Fall Advocacy Guide at: http://bit.ly/2aUc0yZ

See NLIHC's Sample Candidate Questionnaire at: http://bit.ly/2bm5Esk

For more information and best practices on how nonprofit organizations and individuals can lobby their elected officials, see the "Lobbying: Individual and 501(c)(3) Organizations" chapter in NLIHC's *2016 Advocates' Guide* at: http://bit.ly/2azsrTX

From the Field
Oregon Advocates Launch Campaign to End No-Cause Evictions

Low income renters and advocates in Oregon launched the #JustCauseBecause campaign on September 22, in conjunction with the National Renter's Day of Action. #JustCauseBecause is a statewide effort to pass legislation that will bring an end to increasingly prevalent no-cause evictions. The campaign is also working toward a repeal of Oregon's ban on local rent stabilization ordinances. The rally took place at the State Capitol in Salem and was followed by a hearing of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing at which advocates and community leaders offered testimony to highlight the injustice of no-cause evictions and make the case for legislative change. #JustCauseBecause is led by Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), an NLIHC member, and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) of Oregon. Oregon Opportunity Network and the Oregon Housing Alliance, both NLIHC state partners, participate on the campaign's steering committee and provided testimony at the hearing.

State Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer (D) addresses advocates at the #JustCauseBecause campaign launch rally.

The campaign launch rally was attended by approximately 100 advocates and included the personal stories of residents who have had to leave their homes due to no-cause evictions or large rent increases. The rally set the tone for a successful hearing that involved testimony from a broad range of interests including service providers, affordable housing developers, labor groups, and impacted renters.

Current Oregon law allows for landlords to decline renewal of a renter's lease, including month-to-month agreements, regardless of how long a household has lived in that home, paid rent on time, and complied with all the terms of their lease. The #JustCauseBecause campaign proposal would allow evictions only for violations of the rental contract or limited "no-fault" circumstances such as a landlord moving into a unit they own. The campaign also proposes that communities have discretion on limiting the rate of rent increases. Testimony at the hearing referred to residents who have had rent increases of as much as 350%, which in practice amounts to a no-cause eviction because no renter can be reasonably expected to absorb such an abrupt increase in expenses. Landlords must currently provide 90-days of notice prior to rent increases. At the rally, 15-year-old Cinthya Guitierrez shared her personal perspective about the disruptive impact such a notice can have on families: "I should be concentrating on school instead of thinking where we're gonna end up after the 90 days."

#JustCauseBecause has attracted a key supporter in House Speaker Tina Kotek (D), who announced her support at Oregon Opportunity Network's annual gala event on September 12. Ms. Kotek emphasized the dire urgency for solutions but forecast that there would be significant opposition to the proposal from the landlord and developer community.

Because the Oregon 2017 legislative session does not begin until February, no specific legislation has yet been introduced. The campaign is busy at work to educate legislators about their proposal and to gain supporters on key committees.

Katrina Holland, interim executive director of CAT, emphasized in her testimony the importance of stability for families and neighborhoods. "Entire buildings are being displaced by no-cause evictions," she said. "Communities are being uprooted from where they live and told to leave without cause."

Oregon Opportunity Network Executive Director Jerome Brooks addressed the committee as a representative of the nonprofit development community. "Oregon Opportunity Network is proud to support the Just Cause campaign," he said. "Many of our nonprofit housing members are themselves landlords, operating apartment buildings in communities across the state. We know that fair, balanced landlord-tenant policies are essential to support housing security and stability for folks with low incomes."

For more information about the #JustCauseBecause campaign, contact Neighborhood Partnerships Deputy Director for Policy and Communications Alison McIntosh at amcintosh@neighborhoodpartnerships.org or Oregon Opportunity Network Policy Director Ruth Atkins at ruth@oregonon.org.

The campaign website for #JustCauseBecause is at: http://oregoncat.org/justcause/

A Storify article illustrating tweets from the campaign launch rally is at: http://bit.ly/2cXFoqh

More NLIHC News

NLIHC Seeks Fall Research Intern

NLIHC is accepting applications for the fall 2016 research internship position. Interns are highly valued and fully integrated into our staff work. We seek students passionate about social justice issues, with excellent writing and interpersonal skills, and preferably with quantitative research experience.

The NLIHC Research Intern assists in ongoing quantitative and qualitative research projects, writes weekly articles on current research for *Memo to Members*, attends briefings, and responds to research inquiries.

This position runs until December and is at least 20-30 hours a week. Two semester placements are possible. NLIHC provides modest stipends.

A cover letter, resume, and writing sample are required for consideration. In your cover letter, please indicate that you are applying for the fall 2016 research internship.

Interested students should send their materials to: Paul Kealey, chief operating officer, National Low Income Housing Coalition, 1000 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005 via email to pkealey@nlihc.org.

NLIHC Staff

Andrew Aurand, Vice President for Research, x245
Josephine Clarke, Executive Assistant, x226
Dan Emmanuel, Research Analyst, x316
Ellen Errico, Creative Design Manager, x246
Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, x314
Stephanie Hall, Field Intern/MSW Practicum Fellow x230
Sarah Jemison, Housing Advocacy Organizer, x244
Sarah Mickelson, Director of Public Policy, x228
Paul Kealey, Chief Operating Officer, x232
Joseph Lindstrom, Senior Organizer for Housing Advocacy, x222
Youness Mou, Graphic Design Intern, x250
Khara Norris, Director of Administration, x242
James Saucedo, Housing Advocacy Organizer, x233
Jacob Schmidt, Policy Intern, x241
Pia Shah, Communications Intern, x252
Christina Sin, Development Coordinator, x234
Elayne Weiss, Senior Housing Policy Analyst, x243
Renee Willis, Vice President for Field and Communications, x247
Diane Yentel, President and CEO, x228