

Sent: Friday, December 11, 2020 5:21 PM

Subject: NACo CEWD Steering Committee December Call Recap Memo

SECTION 8 VOUCHER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Committee was joined by Georgi Banna, the Director of Policy & Program Development at the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), for a presentation on the Section 8 Voucher program. Prior to the Q&A portion of his presentation, Banna provided a brief overview of the program:

- Vouchers generally go to housing authorities, which can be at the city, county or state level and, occasionally, to non-profits.
- Vouchers can generally only be used within a certain jurisdiction and, in some cases, jurisdictions can overlap.
 - Jurisdictions are generally designed at the state level but can be changed at the housing authority level.
- Vouchers are generally tenant-based in most situations, though they can, in some situations, be attached to a project or to units. However, generally vouchers are portable. Tenants have the option to move with a voucher.
- Tenants who have been issued a voucher in one jurisdiction can move to any other jurisdiction, and this movement can work a few different ways:
 - The new jurisdiction's housing authority can bill the old jurisdiction's housing authority
 - The new jurisdiction's housing authority can absorb the tenant using a new voucher, and the old voucher can be returned to the original housing authority
- There has been some discussion of potentially changing the portability of vouchers, but this would likely require additional federal funding.

Following Banna's summary, Commissioner Kathryn Starkey, from Pasco County, Fla., noted a situation in which people coming from areas with long voucher waiting lists are coming into her county where the waiting list is relatively short. She asked about the possibility of using local preference when working through the voucher waiting list

Banna explained that people can apply for any voucher waitlist in any jurisdiction from anywhere else in the country. He noted the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) does not institute federal preferences but that housing authorities can use local preferences if desired. For those housing agencies with no local preferences in place, the waitlist generally tends to be first come, first serve. Banna recommended officials review the housing authority's administrative plan, which will indicate how the voucher waitlist is prioritized.

In response to a question from Commissioner Jennifer Kreitz, from Mono County, Calif., Banna explain the difference between two different kinds of vouchers. He stated that there are standard vouchers and special vouchers. Mainstream vouchers are special vouchers that assist non-elderly persons with disabilities. Standard vouchers, on the other hand, can be used by anyone who is eligible.

Commissioner Tarenia Carthan, from Douglas County, Ga., asked what can be done if a voucher is being used incorrectly. Banna replied that the local housing authority has a responsibility to meet state and federal regulations and would be subject to penalties if they do not.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Joe Mullins, from Flagler County, Fla., Banna touched on the importance of affordable housing. He highlighted the low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) and stated that his organization is looking to strengthen this credit. Banna also mentioned that his group is pushing for construction assistance.

COVID-19 RELIEF UPDATE

The Committee was joined by Eryn Hurley, NACo's Association Legislative Director for Finance, Pensions and Intergovernmental Affairs (FPIGA). She provided an update on the current state of COVID-19 relief negotiations.

Prior to this week's negotiations, NACo [sent a letter to congressional leadership](#) urging our federal partners to issue direct, flexible federal aid. In addition to aid, NACo urged Congress to immediately pass legislation that would extend the current Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) deadline of December 30. After sending the letter, the Problem Solvers Caucus and a bipartisan group of Senators released a [\\$908 billion framework](#). Their proposal includes:

- \$160 billion for state, local and tribal governments
- \$180 billion for additional unemployment insurance
- \$288 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- \$12 billion for CDFI/MDI community lender support
- \$25 billion for rental housing assistance

While the details of how the \$160 billion would be distributed are not yet public – the group has yet to release legislative text – it appears as though \$8 billion of that will be for tribes and the rest will be split between state and local governments. NACo has been engaging with both House and Senate leadership on what a distribution formula might look like so that counties of all sizes receive as much funding as possible to address and mitigate the effects of COVID-19.

While there had been some positive movement on the Problem Solvers Caucus relief package this week, talks between Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Democratic leadership broke down on Thursday, when McConnell said Republicans would not support the proposal. One of the major sticking points is the \$160 billion for state, local and tribal governments – which the GOP largely opposes.

However, as negotiations continue NACo is asking our members to reach out to their members of Congress to press for direct and flexible funding for state and local governments. If this funding comes through and is distributed through the states, NACo is asking for a 15-day period for states to sub-allocate funding to counties, based on population size, with no additional mandates or policy add-ons.

- **Action Item:** Please [contact your member of Congress](#) to urge passage of a COVID-19 relief package that includes direct, flexible federal aid for counties of all sizes.

Eryn also highlighted the upcoming December 30 deadline to spend Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) dollars. If these funds are not spent by that time, the U.S. Treasury Department will be able to recoup the remaining funds. Notably, the Treasury's Office of Inspector General (OIG) recently released a key resource to provide guidance on the [reporting process for payroll expenses and on the appeals process](#).

NACo BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

NACo Second Vice President Denise Winfrey joined the committee to provide an update on the December 5 NACo Board of Director's meeting. NACo Board members heard from the President-Elect Biden, Vice President-Elect Harris and Director designate for White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Julie Chavez-Rodriguez and appreciate the partnership we are forging with the incoming administration. Winfrey noted the Board has decided to hold a virtual NACo Legislative Conference in 2021 with committee meetings, workshops and general sessions spread out over several days. The registration fee for the conference will be no more than \$275.00 for NACo members. She also highlighted the approval of the ten policy steering committee policies including the CEWD Steering Committee and the ten overall 2021 NACo Legislative Priorities.

The Board approved 10 national policy priorities for 2021 are the following:

- Advocate for additional federal COVID-19 relief in the form of direct, flexible aid to counties of all sizes
- Restore the balance of federalism and optimize intergovernmental partnerships
- Promote county infrastructure priorities
- Promote mental health and substance use treatment and address essential criminal justice reforms
- Boost advanced broadband deployment and accessibility while preserving local decision-making
- Support full funding for Payments in Lieu of Taxes and the Secure Rural Schools program
- Promote county priorities in future Environmental Protection Agency and other federal rulemaking
- Strengthen election security and safety
- Enhance community resilience through regional and local disaster preparedness
- Promote workforce opportunities and supportive services for county residents in changing economies.

Members appreciate Second Vice President Winfrey for her leadership and continued participation with the CEWD Steering Committee.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

FY 2021 Appropriations

Congress this week passed a short-term spending bill to extend the government funding deadline from Friday, December 11 to Friday, December 18. The bill is a clean extension of current funding levels, but it does include a one-week extension of certain health programs. The House passed the bill on Wednesday and the Senate cleared the bill Friday afternoon. The bill now awaits the president's signature.

The one-week extension of funding provided by the bill gives appropriators more time to come to an agreement on a longer-term spending bill. Differences over issues as funding for a border wall and the Department of Homeland security, are holding up discussions on a final end-of-year omnibus and, if they persist, it is possible lawmakers could pass another stopgap spending bill. The additional week would also provide negotiators with more time to come to an agreement on a COVID-19 relief package, which many lawmakers are hoping to attach to the year-end spending bill.

Marcia Fudge to Lead HUD

President-elect Joe Biden is expected to tap Rep. Marcia Fudge, who represents Ohio's 11th Congressional District, as secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Rep. Fudge serves on the House Administration, Agriculture, and Education and Labor Committees. She has been supportive of funding for key housing, community and economic development programs including CDBG and HOME Investment Partnerships program.

Vaccine Development and Distribution Update

On December 10, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee recommended the agency issue an emergency use authorization (EUA) for Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine. The FDA must now decide whether to provide the company with an EUA, though it is expected to do so. Once that hurdle is cleared, the Pfizer will begin shipping the first doses almost immediately.

The Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee is also scheduled to discuss Moderna's coronavirus vaccine on December 17. If it recommends the vaccine receive an EUA and the FDA agrees, Moderna will also begin shipping doses soon after.

According to the Trump administration, up to 40 million doses of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine – enough to vaccinate 20 million people – will be available by the end of 2020. The administration additionally expects between 5 and 10 million additional doses to be made available weekly in early 2021.

On Tuesday of this past week, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices advised the CDC that the first round of coronavirus vaccine doses should go to residents of long-term care facilities and health care workers. The Committee's recommendations are not binding, but many states are taking their cues from the panel.

NACO RESOURCES

- **NACo held an informative LUCC/RAC Virtual Symposium on December 10:** LUCC, RAC members talk housing, hunger as pandemic continues. **To read the CN article highlighting the symposium, please click [here](#).**
- **COVID Relief Now Survey Analysis:** The survey, by the COVID RELIEF NOW coalition, a partnership of nearly 300 major public and private sector groups, shows small businesses, cities and counties are experiencing devastating impacts of the coronavirus pandemic without additional federal relief. **To read the analysis, please click [here](#).**

- **NACo Webinar: The Future of Digital Payments: Solutions for Public-Private Partnerships, Thursday, December 17, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM EST.** This December, NACo released a new report analyzing the benefits and process of converting county payment systems to digital platforms. This webinar will unveil key findings from this report, including the potential cost savings to county governments, tools to understand your community's payment preferences and ways to implement digital payments in various departments. **Register [here](#).**
- **NACo Webinar: Enhancing Fiscal Resilience in a Disruptive Environment: What We've Learned. What's Next, Friday, December 18, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM EST.** As today's unprecedented challenges evolve, county leaders need strategic options to continue leveraging external funding, drive revenue growth, protect past spending and contain costs. Join NACo, KPMG and county officials for a discussion on different approaches to enhance resilience in light of shifting public health, economic, budgetary and community dynamics – and how the difficult lessons of 2020 can help us navigate a still uncertain 2021 outlook. **Register [here](#).**
- **NACo Coronavirus Relief Fund Hub:** NACo developed a resource page to provide an overview of how counties across the country are distributing their Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) payments and other federal funds authorized under the CARES Act. **To view the resource page, please click [here](#).**

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