



Dear Landlord,

We recently let you know about some of the steps we have taken to prevent households from losing their housing during the COVID-19 public health emergency. You are vital partners in this effort, and we appreciate your support in assisting the 6,500 households in our local Housing Choice Voucher program.

This letter outlines a policy change related to rent increase requests in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program: **Home Forward will not process rent increase requests that would be effective beginning January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021, or for any increase requests received after September 1, 2020.**

We are taking this step to avoid additional rent burden on HCV households. This approach also helps us maintain current assistance levels for households that rely on these crucial subsidies during the pandemic and ongoing housing emergency.

What is expected of landlords or property owners?

There is nothing that you need to do at this time.

- You will continue to receive consistent subsidy payments each month.
- For lease renewals starting during 2021, or received after September 1, 2020, Home Forward will not approve rent increases.
- This is a temporary agency policy and is not grounds to evict a Housing Choice Voucher household.
- We will communicate with you during summer 2021 when we have more information regarding future rent increase approval policies.

If you have additional questions, please contact Home Forward Landlord Services at landlordservices@homeforward.org or (503) 802-8333 (option 5). You can also directly contact the tenant's rent assistance service coordinator.

How does this change impact households in the HCV program?

Nearly half of rent increases impact the tenant's portion of the rent because the rent is above the payment standard that Home Forward sets based on HUD Fair Market Rents. We estimate that rent increases will add over \$3.3 million per year to the tenant portion of the rent for HCV households, approximately \$840 per household each year. A pause in rent increases will alleviate this additional burden.

There are also equity considerations and recent data reveals disparities that break down by race and ethnicity. For example:

- **Rent increases are more common for certain populations.** 43% of households identifying as Native American, 39% of households identifying as Hispanic/Latino, and 38% of households identifying as Black see rent increases each year, contrasted with 23% of households identifying as white.
- **Rent increase amounts are higher for certain populations.** Rent increases for households identifying as Hispanic/Latino average \$89 per month and rent increases for households identifying as Black average \$81 per month. Meanwhile, the average rent increase for households identifying as white is lower at \$64 per month.
- **Certain populations are experiencing disproportionate negative impacts from COVID-19.** Across all subsidy programs, households identifying as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Black, and Hispanic/Latino are reporting income reductions that are at least \$3,000 greater than annual income reductions in households identifying as white.

While these statistics are based on recent trends, they have gotten worse during this pandemic, and we expect they will continue well into 2021.

How does this change impact Home Forward's ability to maintain the HCV program?

Home Forward's data reveals that rent increases add approximately \$1.8 million in subsidy payments each year, without a matched increase in funding from HUD. This comes on top of subsidy payment increases related to COVID-19 which have increased to nearly \$100,000 per month (\$1.2 million per year) and continue to climb. Pausing rent increases is one step we can take to make sure we continue to serve the community with this vital resource.

Thank you for helping us provide safe, quality housing for Housing Choice Voucher households. This public health emergency requires that we come together to do what we can to protect everyone's health and safety, and having a place to call home is fundamental to individual and public health. We request your patience and understanding as we work to maintain the safety and security of the households we serve.

Take good care of yourself and your loved ones, and please call us if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Dena Ford-Avery
Director, Housing Choice Vouchers