



COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY

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The Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority Board approves additional \$1 million to Landlord Incentive Program to recruit more landlords who can help Franklin County residents find affordable rental housing

New incentive program comes as data shows only 29 available and affordable housing units exist for every 100 extremely low-income households in Greater Columbus

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) Board of Commissioners has approved an additional \$1 million to its Landlord Incentive Program to spur more participation by Franklin County landlords in a program designed to offer housing to extremely low-income households in Greater Columbus.

The CMHA Board is investing \$400,000 toward security deposit assistance and homebuyer education classes for its recipients of federal Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) and allocating \$600,000 toward vacancy payments to encourage more landlords to join the program. The funding is available through December 31, 2022, or until all funds are exhausted, whichever comes first.

“The affordable housing crisis is not unique to our Greater Columbus region — it’s a problem throughout the entire nation,” said CMHA Board Chairman Stanley Harris.

“Unfortunately, no ‘magic wand’ solution is imminent that will solve the crisis overnight in Central Ohio and beyond,” Harris said. “The CMHA’s landlord incentivization program highlights just one of the many innovative approaches community leaders are working toward to address the challenge.”

CMHA data reflects a well-documented shortage of affordable housing in Central Ohio. Only 29 affordable housing units are available for every 100 extremely low-income households in the Columbus and Franklin County area.

For decades, new housing production has lagged behind household growth in the U.S., resulting in a severe shortage of affordable homes. In 2021, the U.S. faced an estimated shortage of between 5.5 million and 6.8 million units, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank. To close this “underbuilding gap,” the center projects the U.S. would need to construct 60% more units than were created in 2020 over the next decade.

CMHA administers nearly 13,000 federal vouchers in Franklin County, and provides rental assistance to a total of 80,000 households (250,000 individuals) throughout Ohio and Washington D.C. In 2021, CMHA issued over 5,160 vouchers in Franklin County. Approximately 1,700 families out of those 5,160 vouchers are actively looking for a place to call home in Greater Columbus, even though they have a voucher.

CMHA spent over \$1.4 million on its inaugural Landlord Incentive Program in 2021, utilizing all its allocated budget. Nearly 300 new landlords were added to its HCV program, generating housing for over 1,100 new residents.

The approved plan calls for CMHA to pay landlords up to \$750 just for bringing a new unit into the program and also will provide security deposit payments up to \$750 for the voucher holder.

Board members said another reason a Franklin County landlord should consider joining CMHA's incentive program is that it is government-backed, so the money is a guaranteed payment. They also noted providing a voucher holder with a place to live demonstrates that landlords and property owners are committed to helping solve the affordable housing crisis in Central Ohio.

"It is important to note that no number is too small, even one unit can help a family," said CMHA Commissioner Wade Steen. "As our community grows, it will be vital to ensure that all families who live and work in Columbus can afford to remain here."

A 2021 study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of the Inspector General found the use of incentives such as security deposit assistance for residents were effective in boosting landlord participation and expanding affordable housing options for HCV renters.

The Housing Choice Voucher program is rent assistance administered by HUD. Congress established the voucher program with the Housing and Community Development Act in 1974. The goal was to ensure that low-wage earners could find safe housing outside of public housing options.

The HCV program provides housing assistance for very low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities, allowing them to live in quality affordable housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants can find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, or apartments in neighborhoods of their choice. Participants are free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and are not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects. A CMHA relocation specialist is available to assist residents find affordable housing within the Columbus area.

A family that is issued a voucher is responsible for finding a suitable unit where the owner agrees to rent under the HCV program. Rental units must meet housing quality standards of health and safety, as determined by CMHA.

A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by CMHA on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

The program not only helps renters, but it also provides landlords a steady, guaranteed income. CMHA currently pays Franklin County landlords over \$8 million per month through its voucher program and the authority is looking to expand on this effort.

CMHA announced last March its plans to issue an additional 1,000 housing vouchers through 2022, bringing the total number of individuals and families in Franklin County receiving rental assistance to 13,500.

For more information, visit cmhanet.com.

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About CMHA: CMHA helps people access affordable housing through collaborative partnerships, promotes neighborhood revitalization and assists residents in accessing needed social services. CMHA has more than doubled its portfolio of housing over that last five years. It owns over 4,500 units of affordable housing and through its Housing Choice Voucher and Project Based Rental Assistance Programs provides rental assistance to more than 250,000 Ohio and Washington, D.C., residents. Half of the authority's apartments are set aside as workforce housing for families earning 80% of the area median income.