

Housing Opportunities for All Workgroup Meeting

October 30th, 2020

MEETING NOTES

Key takeaways

- Housing Opportunities for All Workgroup members and other meeting participants discussed the main policy and budget questions related to supporting renters' immediate, medium, and long-term needs. Through a real-time flash poll and follow-up polls, workgroup members and other meeting participants identified four broad approaches to addressing renter needs (in no particular order):
 1. **Resources and Funding** – Participants highlighted specific resources including legal assistance, short and long-term rental assistance for landlords and renters, utility assistance, rental subsidies, and direct payments and property tax relief for homeowners.
 2. **Information and Outreach** – Participants highlighted the need to centralize and streamline information, discussing how hard it is to find and get resources when they are not in one place. This information should be provided in multiple languages. They also highlighted the need to create and publicize a tenant bill of rights.
 3. **Policies** – Participants highlighted several specific policies to help renters including eviction prevention, legal representation in court, rent control, and sealing eviction cases.
 4. **Partnerships** – Participants highlighted several partnerships that could support renters. These included a comprehensive partnership portal, an agreement between the county and utility providers on how to allocate utility assistance, greater coordination between partners to protect tenants, and partnerships to provide job assistance and placement.
- Specific actions within these approaches will be prioritized at the workgroup's November meeting. The goal of prioritization will be to identify urgent actions to recommend to County Council and the County Executive as tenant protections, such as the CDC's eviction moratorium, expire at the end of 2020.
- In addition to specific actions to support renters, common themes for solutions were:
 - **Permanence**, such as making temporary renter support programs and resources into permanent programs offered by the County.
 - **Flexibility** by lowering barriers to access and use, with attention to providing resources to people regardless of immigration status or existing arrears.
 - **Strong outreach** with special attention to multi-lingual outreach.
 - **More housing affordability**, including vouchers and innovative models of housing such as community land trusts and county-run housing.

Local Perspectives on Supporting Renters: Panel Discussion Among Community Partners

The workgroup invited six community partners to share their insights about the emerging and long-standing needs among renters living in Prince George's County and some of the ways to support renters (including after the expiration of the CDC's eviction moratorium). The partners were:

- Sarah Basehart - Independence Now
- Gloria Brown-Burnett - Prince George's County Department of Social Services
- Maryann Dillon - HIP, Inc.
- Ashanti Martinez - Casa de Maryland
- Jessica Quincosa - Community Legal Services of Prince George's County
- Sabrina Wear - Maryland Legal Aid

Panelists highlighted several issues that have become more apparent due to COVID-19 pandemic, including cost burden, issues related to the amount of documentation required to receive assistance, and a need for legal services to prevent evictions. Immigrant and refugee communities are especially hard hit as they are unable or afraid to use support programs.

Panelists suggested investment in deep housing subsidies to help tenants pay deferred rent during the eviction moratorium. Panelists offered examples of partnerships between renters, landlords, and courts to create payment plans and reduce future evictions. Panelists also suggested the need to expand legal services, with expanded communication and marketing efforts to increase program usage.