



**homeforward**

hope. access. potential.

DEBORAH OLSON

*Deborah,*

August 2020

Dear Deborah Olson,

Home Forward is taking steps to help keep your housing affordable. We are writing to let you know that **Home Forward will not allow your landlord to raise your rent in 2021.** This is so that your tenant portion will not increase during 2021 due to your landlord increasing the rent.

**How does this change affect your household?**

- Home Forward will continue to pay a portion of your rent each month.
- After September 1, 2020, Home Forward will deny any rent increase that your landlord requests that would take effect through 2021.
- This policy change cannot be a reason for your landlord to evict you.
- You are only required to pay the tenant portion of the rent. Your landlord may not ask you to pay "side deal" rent amounts.

**If you think that your landlord is violating this policy, or if you have questions about your legal rights, please contact Oregon Law Center or Legal Aid Services of Oregon at (800) 228-6958.**

You don't need to do anything right now. If you have questions, please call your Rent Assistance Services Coordinator (RASC). We have included, with this letter, an info sheet about rent increases and how they affect the Housing Choice Voucher program.

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

## **Info sheet: rent increases and how they affect the Housing Choice Voucher program**

### **How do rent increases affect HCV households?**

Nearly half of rent increases impact the tenant's portion of the rent. This adds an average of \$840 in tenant rents per household each year (totaling \$3.3 million across the full HCV program). A pause in rent increases will alleviate this additional burden.

There are also equity concerns that break down by race and ethnicity. For example:

- **Rent increases are more common for certain populations in the HCV program.** 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. This compares with 23% of households identifying as white that experience a rent increase.
- **Rent increase amounts are higher for certain populations in the HCV program.** 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 Home Forward 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?**

Rent increases add about \$1.8 million in subsidy payments each year, without an equal increase in federal funding. We are also seeing subsidy cost 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 to make sure we can serve the community with this vital resource.

This public health emergency requires that we come together to do what we can to protect everyone's health and safety. Having a place to call home is necessary to individual and public health. We will continue to review our programs to maintain the safety and security of the households we serve.