

## Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

NMHC/NAA strongly support the Section 8 housing choice voucher program, which has long served as America's primary rental subsidy program. The program, which provides subsidized rents for low-income families in private rental housing, can be one of the most effective means of addressing the need for affordable housing. It allows families to choose their housing and helps reduce poverty concentration.

### NMHC/NAA VIEWPOINT

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## 2 MILLION

**APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF VERY OR EXTREMELY LOW INCOME FAMILIES HOUSED IN THE PRIVATE MARKET ANNUALLY THROUGH THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM.**

However, the program has been plagued with inefficiencies and onerous bureaucratic requirements that increase the cost to rent to a Section 8 voucher holder and discourage private owners from accepting Section 8 vouchers. Owners who participate in the program must sign a three-way lease with the resident and the housing authority, and they are subject to (often cumbersome) program restrictions, such as repetitive unit inspections, resident eligibility certification and other regulatory paperwork.

NMHC/NAA support common sense reforms to the program that help control costs and improve the program for both renters and property owners. These include:

- Streamlining the Property Inspection Process
- Simplifying Rent and Income Calculations
- Reducing Costly Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Translation Burden.
- Extending the Contract Term for Project-based Vouchers from 15 to 20 Years

Recognizing the regulatory burden the program places on private owners, Congress specifically made participation in the program voluntary. However, at the state and federal level, efforts have been undertaken to make it illegal for a private owner to refuse to rent to a Section 8 voucher holder. The most recent example is mortgage reform legislation enacted in 2009 (P.L. 111-22) that requires new owners who purchase foreclosed properties to assume any existing Section 8 housing assistance payment contracts and to allow Section 8 renters to remain in place for the term of the lease. These provisions effectively mandate voucher participation.

While superficially appealing, such mandates are ultimately self-defeating because they greatly diminish private investment in affordable housing and reduce the supply. Increased participation should occur because the program has been reformed, and renting to a Section 8 voucher holder (from the owner's perspective) is comparable to renting to an unsubsidized renter.

If the housing needs of America's low- and moderate-income families are going to be met, it is imperative that we improve the Section 8 program and preserve its voluntary nature.

[Learn more at nmhc.org](http://nmhc.org) and [naahq.org](http://naahq.org)

