

## Section 8 Revitalization

### ***NAA Viewpoint***

*NAA strongly supports the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, however, its potential as the most effective, short-term solution to the housing affordability crisis is hindered by bureaucracy and red tape. Congress should streamline and revitalize the program to encourage greater voluntary participation by rental housing providers and help more low- and moderate-income families.*

***Two million very- or extremely low-income families are housed in the private market annually through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.***

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program has long served as America's primary method of rental assistance. Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered by local public housing authorities (PHAs), the program provides subsidized rents for qualifying low-income families in private rental housing, including apartments.

This public-private partnership has the potential to be the nation's most effective, short-term solution to address the housing affordability crisis, but only if the bureaucracy and red tape associated with the program can be reduced or eliminated altogether. Although many rental housing providers across the country are supporters of the program and actively participate, the lion's share of the industry does not. Rental housing providers experience significant challenges that create uncertainty in rental housing operations and often undermine the ability of owners to properly manage risk. These lead existing participants to leave the program and discouraging nonparticipating providers from opting in.

Any improvements to the HCV Program that streamline the leasing process and make it comparable to a standard leasing transaction would increase voluntary participation by rental housing providers. This would, in turn, increase choice and access to quality housing opportunities for voucher holders, considerably benefiting low- and moderate-income families.

Revitalization of the HCV Program is a key priority for the apartment industry. The improvements the National Apartment Association (NAA) urges policymakers to support include:

- "Landlord liaison" positions at PHAs that allow property owners to have a dedicated contact to answer questions or address concerns.
- Risk mitigation funding for participating owners and operators to recover lost rent or the cost of repairs or damages caused by voucher holders.
- Administrative fee incentives for PHAs, awarded by HUD to those who improve their efficiency and consistency.
- Greater funding for HCVs overall to ease pressure on existing waiting lists and allow more individuals to obtain assistance.

Finally, it is imperative that the HCV Program remain voluntary. At the program's inception, Congress explicitly made participation voluntary because of the regulatory burdens associated with the program. Policymakers at all levels of government are considering "source of income" proposals that are intended primarily to prohibit discrimination against individuals who receive housing subsidies. However, in practice, these laws require housing providers to participate in the HCV Program. While well intentioned, such mandates are self-defeating because they greatly diminish private market participation and the number of available units in high opportunity areas.