

Notes from NAA Advocate Webinar and Other Background Information

Overall Climate

- The political climate is very bad; there are deep partisan differences making trust hard to find between Congressional leadership and Administration
- The window for legislation is closing soon
- Issues we are tackling are bipartisan and will require both sides of the aisle to move forward.

Affordability Context

- 38.1M households are cost burdened, i.e., 30% or more of their income goes towards housing
- Cost-burdened share of renters doubled in the last 50 years
- We have seen an 8.6 percent increase in household income while at the same time 45.8 percent cost in living over the last 20 years.
- Rental housing demand is up and supply is not keeping pace; we need 420,000 new apartment homes every year between now and 2030 to keep up with demand. We have reached this number only twice in recent years.
- Local hurdles impede the ability to increase housing (apartment) supply. These include zoning, nimbysism, impact fees, etc.

Congressional Action

- Congress is considering policy options like rent control, limits on evictions, and limits on resident screening.
- In this context, we are focusing on three main issues for our lobby day; 1) housing supply and affordability, 2) improvements to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, and 3) changing the narrative around evictions.

Housing Supply and Affordability

- ASK #1: House: Thank you for passing HR 4351, the Yes in My Backyard Act
Senate: Please support S 1919, the Yes in My Backyard Act
- There are barriers at the local level that discourage increasing the housing supply; this bill forces local governments to periodically examine these policies.
- Specifically, the bill requires a report within last five years from any jurisdiction that receives Community Develop Block Grant (CDBG) funding, on the status of various land use policies in their jurisdiction. Most municipalities in the US receive some level of funding from the CDBG so this will have wide application.
- The grant recipient must report 1) whether they have adopted the land use policies, 2) plan to adopt the policies, or 3) explain how adopting the policies will benefit the jurisdiction.
- The land use policies that must be address include such things as enacting high-density single-family and multifamily zoning, expanding by-right multifamily zoned areas, increasing the allowable floor area ratio in multifamily housing areas, streamlining or shortening permitting processes and timelines, establishing density bonuses, and donating vacant land for affordable housing development.
- The bill does not require any jurisdictions to change their policies; the point of the bill is to force jurisdictions to examine and be more transparent about barriers.

Improve Section 8 Program

- ASK #2: As legislative opportunities arise to change the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, please consider our four suggestions.

- 1) support HUD funding for landlord liaison positions within Public Housing Authorities (PHAs);
- 2) encourage PHAs to provide risk mitigation funds to cover lost rent or damage to units caused by HCV recipients;
- 3) provide PHAs incentives (via additional funding) for efficiency and consistency improvements, and
- 4) increase funding for the HCV program so more families can access it.
- The HCV program is the primary method of providing rental housing assistance to those in need, but inefficiencies and inconsistent administration reduce interest by private market to participate in the program.
- Only one in five families that qualify for a voucher get one.

Evictions

- ASK #3:
 - 1) Provide emergency funding assistance to address short-term rent payment disruptions (which isn't usually a large amount of money and could stop an eviction before it starts).
 - 2) Enable/support voluntary mediation, which can work, however a landlord should have the option to move forward with eviction proceedings.
 - 3) Reduce barriers to development of rental housing (our ASK #1)
 - 4) Reform the HCV program (our ASK #2)
- Since publication of Matthew Desmond's book *Evicted* in 2016, and creation of a national database of eviction cases by Desmond via his EvictionLab group, a spotlight has focused on the eviction process nationwide.
- This issue is being looked at with a bipartisan lens, and legislative proposals have been introduced related to evictions.
- We need to tell our story about evictions, underscoring that it is time consuming and expensive, and is the only legal remedy a landlord has to remove a resident if they aren't paying rent or if they are violating lease terms.
- We need to change the perception that landlords want to raise rents and evict people; it would be useful to share stories about how we work with residents to avoid the eviction process.

Issues Briefing

- NAA will host an issues briefing on Tuesday, where they will go into these items in more detail.
- Participants will also be given additional materials to prepare you for meetings, including
- an FAQ on some of the hardest questions we may get.
- Packets will include detailed information on the number of apartments, size of the industry, etc. in each Congressional District/State.

Follow Up

- NAA wants us to cultivate relationships with Congressional offices; be sure to send thank you's.
- Use this opportunity as a springboard to build relationships in district offices.

Additional Reading

- NAA: [Housing Takes Center Stage in D.C.](#), January 22, 2020
- NAA: [It's Not the Source, It's the Strings](#), July 2019
- NAA: [Barriers to Apartment Construction Index](#), April 2019
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Schneider: Desmond's 'Evicted' is a flawed masterpiece](#), April 2017
- The Nation: [America's Insidious Eviction Problem](#), March 2016