

MOTION

In 2021, as part of the American Rescue Plan, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) distributed 70,000 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) to housing agencies across the country. 3,365 of those vouchers were awarded to the City of Los Angeles. More recently, HUD awarded an additional \$60 million in funding to the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, mostly in the form of new vouchers for people experiencing homelessness.

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), a State-chartered public agency, is responsible for the distribution of those vouchers, along with all other vouchers provided under federal programs such as Section 8.

Throughout the Emergency Housing Voucher program and in years prior, service providers and public agencies working to house people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles have raised serious concerns about HACLA's administration of vouchers, pointing to slow approval timelines and inefficient processes for matching individuals with vouchers to apartment units. In July of 2022, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that only 196 – less than 6% – of the 3,365 vouchers awarded to the City had been used to move people into permanent housing units.

Issues with leasing vouchers to apartments precede the Emergency Housing Voucher program. Last year, the *L.A. Times* reported that HACLA had returned \$82 million in federal grants allocated between 2015 and 2020 back to HUD – the majority of the \$150 million returned by LA County's three main housing agencies for people experiencing homelessness. The obligation to return these funds resulted largely from the underutilization of federal voucher resources.

One of the factors contributing to HACLA's low voucher utilization rate is a reluctance to match multiple clients to each voucher. The Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), the voucher distributing agency for L.A. County, matches two clients to each of its vouchers because roughly 40% of initial voucher matches do not result in a lease of an apartment. As a result, if a voucher does not ultimately lead to a "lease-up" for one client, it can be quickly used instead by the other client to whom it was issued. Because HACLA only matches vouchers to a single client, a failure to lease-up necessitates starting over from scratch with another client, which often means the loss of a fully negotiated unit and weeks or months of waiting time to make a new voucher-client match.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) has recommended other changes in HACLA policy to replicate LACDA best practices, including increased flexibility in negotiating fair rental agreements with landlords and completing those negotiations prior to unit inspection rather than after. More broadly, LAHSA has recommended that to reduce delays, the document review, negotiation, and unit inspection processes required to lease-up a voucher-holder should take place concurrently rather than sequentially.



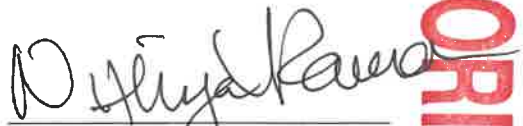
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Difficulties and delays in matching voucher-holders to apartments are some of the most significant obstacles in the process of navigating a person experiencing homelessness off the street and into safe, permanent housing. If the City of Los Angeles is ever to end its homelessness crisis, and if new programs for bringing more people indoors such as Inside Safe are to achieve success, we must swiftly and definitively address the inefficiencies in the voucher allocation and leasing process.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council direct the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), with the assistance of the Los Angeles Homelessness Services Authority (LAHSA) and any City departments, as needed, to report back within 30 days with a plan to address the factors within its control that cause the most significant delays in moving voucher-holders into permanent housing units. The report should specify the ways in which HACLA will adjust its internal processes and procedures to achieve improvements in the rate of voucher utilization and the speed with which voucher placements are made, including, but not limited to:

- Matching multiple clients, instead of only one, to each voucher;
- Processing and prioritizing the hundreds of voucher applications of clients who are awaiting EHVs but who are currently housed by service providers using time-limited subsidy funds;
- Consolidating voucher-holder document review, rent negotiation, and unit inspection into one concurrent process rather than three sequenced processes;
- Allowing for greater flexibility on rent comps to expedite the rent negotiation process;
- Participating regularly in LAHSA's project-based Permanent Supportive Housing lease up meetings as a means of solving voucher process issues in a coordinated way, modeled on the Brynhurst pilot; and
- Reporting to the Housing and Homelessness Committee on a regular basis until improvements are implemented and yielding results.

PRESENTED BY:


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SECONDED BY:



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