

Owner News

a publication of

Metropolitan
Boston Housing
Partnership

125 Lincoln Street • Boston, MA 02111 • 617-859-0400 • Fax 617-426-4256 • www.mbhp.org

Spring 2004

Proposed federal budget would cut funding for the Housing Voucher Program

On February 2 the Bush Administration proposed a budget for fiscal year 2005 that would significantly weaken the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8).

The public policy institute, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), reports that the proposed budget would cut \$1.7 billion from the program, or 250,000 housing vouchers nationwide.

Fundamental changes proposed

The Housing Choice Voucher Program was created to assist extremely low-income families and individuals by allowing them to pay 30 percent of their incomes to rent private-market units. The President's proposed plan would deregulate the program so that these individuals and households would no longer be its target population.

For instance, housing authorities whose budgets have been cut might have to choose between serving higher-income households (that are less likely to need assistance) or fewer extremely low-income households.

The proposal would also convert Section 8 into a "block grant" program. Block grants are "dollar-based" funding rather than "housing unit-based" funding. This is likely to result in the continued loss of housing units since the block grant amount will not keep up with increasing housing costs.

Impact on Massachusetts

According to the CBPP, Massachusetts could lose more than 8,600 vouchers by 2005 and more than 27,700 by 2009. MBHP currently has about 14,000 people on its waiting list.

The months ahead

Last year, proposals to cut Section 8 funding and to convert it to a block grant program were defeated. MBHP is working closely with federal groups to oppose block granting and deregulation of the program and to keep the focus on the neediest families and individuals in Massachusetts.

» What you can do

To learn more about the proposed cuts, visit the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities at <http://www.cbpp.org/>.

Contact Governor Romney by mail at: State House, Office of the Governor, Room 360, Boston, MA 02133. You can also call 617-725-4005, fax 617-727-9725 (TTY: 617-727-3666) or e-mail goffice@state.ma.us.

Ask that he work to increase funding for the Section 8 housing voucher program in the federal FY '05 budget, oppose deregulation of the program and the block granting of funds to public housing authorities, keep the focus on the neediest families and individuals in Massachusetts, and provide additional vouchers to the state. *

"The lack of vouchers affects all sectors of the Commonwealth, such as small property owners who rent to Section 8 tenants, communities coping with their growing homeless populations, as well as the elderly and people with disabilities who are struggling to stay in their own homes," explains Julia Kehoe, MBHP's executive director. "Without adequate funding, even current Section 8 participants will be at risk." *

Save the Date: May 18, 2004

In what has become an anticipated annual tradition, MBHP will honor the thousands of property owners we partner with at the agency's **Third Annual Property Owner Appreciation Event on Tuesday, May 18.**

The evening will feature a reception, raffle, keynote speaker, and special recognition awards for those who have gone "above and beyond the call of duty" in partnering with MBHP to provide affordable housing.

Details are still in the works, so look for your invitation with the May check and for updates from our e-mail list and on our Web site, www.mbhp.org. *

In the Community



In January 2004 MBHP tenant and staff volunteers (above) sorted 12,328 pounds of food at the Greater Boston Food Bank – more than 100 meals per volunteer to be distributed to food pantries, soup kitchens, youth programs, and senior centers. *

www.mbhp.org

Conflict Resolution Seminar in late April

The nonprofit organization Mediation for Results is offering a new seminar, “Rental Remedies – Resolve Conflict, Cut Costs and Create New Goals,” to help real estate professionals become more innovative, resourceful, and efficient housing providers.

Led by Peter Shapiro, the program will discuss frameworks for resolving conflicts while saving time and money and explore techniques to manage workloads and reduce stress.

“The goal is to renew and inspire you through discovering new approaches to work,” Shapiro says.

The sessions are on April 29 and May 13 from 2 - 5 p.m. at the Child Development Center (formerly Joyce Chen Restaurant), 390 Rindge Ave., Cambridge. The cost is \$125 for the seminar or \$200 for both the seminar and follow-up intensive session.

For more information or to register, contact Peter Shapiro at 617-494-0444, ext. 317 or petershapiro@justastart.org. *

FAQ: How does MBHP determine rents?

MBHP has always determined rents based on the what is “rent reasonable” in the current market. Based on the current private market rents, we have established rent ranges for similar private market units based on unit size, location, features, and amenities.

Recently we have redesigned its rent determination process to better serve property owners. Section 8 rents are based on payment standards set by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These payments standards are the **maximum rents (including utilities)** that may be paid with a Section 8 voucher. In addition to setting a maximum rent, HUD requires that MBHP determine “reasonable rents” for its voucher holders. Below is how MBHP determines the reasonable rent for each unit:

Step 1

An MBHP inspector conducts a HUD-HQS (Housing Quality Standard) inspection. Once the unit is determined to be in compliance with HUD-HQS requirements, the inspector will rate each unit utilizing a grading system.

Step 2

The rents for all new units must be approved by an MBHP Market Analyst. Reasonable rents are decided based on the unit grade, as determined by the inspector during Step 1. The unit grade correlates with rent ranges. MBHP’s rent ranges (see below) are based on rents paid for private market units of similar size, condition, location, amenities, etc. Please note that final contract rent amounts will be determined by the Market Analyst **only**. Tenants are not authorized to offer rent amounts to property owners.

Step 3

MBHP’s Market Analyst will notify the property owner of the rent amount offered. The property owner may accept or decline this offer.

Rent Ranges (without utilities)

0 BR (studio):	\$724 – \$962
1 BR:	\$852 – \$1,071
2 BR:	\$994 – \$1,339
3 BR:	\$1,207 – \$1,683
4 BR:	\$1,349 – \$1,900
5 BR:	\$1,551 – \$2,154

Rent Ranges (with utilities)

0 BR (studio): ...	\$819 – \$1,057
1 BR:	\$972 – \$1,191
2 BR:	\$1,144 – \$1,489
3 BR:	\$1,387 – \$1,863
4 BR:	\$1,569 – \$2,188
5 BR:	\$1,793 – \$2,396

New Tenant Workshop: “Healthy Homes”

At this monthly workshop MBHP staff members discuss issues that can affect a family’s health, such as asthma, fire prevention/safe exits, food-borne illnesses, poisoning, harmonious living. They also provide attendees with resources for further information.

“Healthy Homes” is free and is held on the last Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at MBHP.

For reservations or information contact the Housing Consumer Education Center at 617-425-6700 or edcenter@mbhp.org. *

Recent Support

MBHP thanks the MetLife Foundation for its generous donation of \$10,000 to support our programs and initiatives.

In addition, MBHP’s Scattered Site Family Emergency Shelter program has received a donation from BJ’s Wholesale Club of “spring cleaning kits.”

If you would like to donate cleaning products to the families in the Scattered Site program or to participants in the Healthy Homes workshops (see left), please contact April Myers at 617-425-6630 or e-mail april.myers@mbhp.org. *