

# Owner News

a publication of

Metropolitan  
Boston Housing  
Partnership

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## From the Executive Director: Section 8 update

**O**n behalf of the MBHP board of directors and staff, thank you for your tremendous efforts to preserve the Section 8 program.

This past April, MBHP sent letters explaining that we might have to terminate some housing voucher contracts because of federal funding cuts to Section 8.

For the past two months MBHP has been working closely with property owners, tenants, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, and the Governor's office to ensure that the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) fully funds the Section 8 program as Congress had intended.

The good news is that our collective lobbying has resulted in HUD's funding all of the vouchers that MBHP administers this year. The bad news is that HUD has not reversed its interpretation of budget language, maintaining it still has the authority to not fund every voucher in use across the country.

The President's fiscal year 2005 budget proposes to drastically under-fund the program and to deregulate the Section 8 program. The bottom line is, the program would no longer be targeted to the most vulnerable among us: extremely low-income elders, disabled individuals, and families with children.

The Administration claims that Section 8 is too expensive. It is – because in this country, housing is too expensive. But beyond cost, Section 8 is valuable because it gives people a chance to become more economically self-sufficient. Stable housing allows people to better access health care, education and employment and stabilizes communities. It also improves quality of life.

This message was never made more clear than by the thousands of Massachusetts tenants and property owners who contacted their elected officials in Congress, the White House, the Governor's office, and who submitted testimony or attended the public hearing in April at the State House.

What we learned was that while circumstances have made Section 8 participants vulnerable, they have also made them incredibly strong. Their strength and ability to communicate how Section 8 has improved or saved their lives and your willingness to fight for the program have gotten us through this most recent struggle.

One MBHP landlord spoke eloquently at the State House hearing on the impact of the proposed cuts: "For voucher holders it's a new beginning, a second chance at life, a sense of self-esteem, and a dream come true. They bring stability to a neighborhood. They don't want to move, they want to put down roots. Now we have to



In an April 2004 statement of the House Committee on Financial Services, Congressman and committee chair Barney Frank said: "The Bush Administration has made a series of policy decisions that appear designed to dismantle the Section 8 program one piece at a time."

tell them that the dream is becoming a nightmare.

"For the property owner it's a nightmare also. Not everyone can take the loss. Many will get behind on their mortgages and go into foreclosure because of the loss of rental income from the Section 8 program. Many will now avoid taking applicants with vouchers, knowing that the contract is useless."

**M**BHP values the strong connection we have with property owners throughout Greater Boston. Thank you for all you do for the Section 8 program, ensuring that our most vulnerable individuals and families have access to safe, permanent, and affordable housing. 🌸

Sincerely,

Julia E. Kehoe, Executive Director



MBHP used project-based Section 8 vouchers to create ten affordable single-room occupancy units at the Pine Street Inn's newest development in Jamaica Plain. The units will remain affordable for ten years, allowing many women and men to benefit from one project-based housing voucher. 🍀

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#### A special thanks to our benefactor:

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#### Other recent grants:

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Emerson College  
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Healthcare for the Homeless  
John Hancock Financial Services  
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## Pass the annual inspection the first time around

As most of you know, HUD requires that all units be inspected at least once a year. Inspections include, but are not limited to, the interior of the unit, all common areas, the entire basement, and all exterior locations. Landlords and tenants are notified of an upcoming inspection at least two weeks in advance.

If the unit does not meet Housing Quality Standards, MBHP allows landlords 30 calendar days to make the necessary repairs, unless it is a serious violation, in which case repairs must be made within 24 hours.

If the unit does not pass on the second inspection, payments are suspended effective immediately. One final inspection will be scheduled to allow property owners to bring the unit into compliance before MBHP terminates the contract.

#### Be prepared

Please remember that inspectors will need access to all common areas of the building, even if tenants do not use areas such as the backyard, attic, or basement.

MBHP suggests you review the list below of the most common reasons a unit can fail **before the first inspection and before any follow-up inspection. During the follow-up, all areas are re-inspected, not just the areas that caused the unit to fail:**

- Having either less than one outlet **and** one permanent overhead light per room **or** having less than two outlets per room.
- Damaged or inoperable outlets.
- Extension cords under rugs, in front of doorways, or running from room to room.
- Frayed, damaged, or taped electrical wiring.
- Cracked, broken, drafty windows and doors.
- Trash receptacles without covers.
- Windows that do not stay open.
- Torn/damaged window screens.
- Inoperable stove, oven, or range.
- Broken or missing sash cords.
- Leaks at the kitchen sink.

- Kitchen garbage disposal not wired to code and/or inoperable.
- Evidence of pest infestation (mice, roaches, etc.).
- Inoperable refrigerator.
- Inoperable or loose toilet.
- Bathroom leaks at the sink, shower/tub, or toilet.
- Inoperable window or improperly vented bathroom fan.
- Tripping hazards due to damaged floors or rugs.
- Missing or damaged handrails on stairways with 4 or more risers.
- Missing or insecure porches, balconies, decks over 30" high. (missing handrail/balusters)
- Exterior/interior chipping or peeling paint regardless of family composition.
- Inadequate exterior lighting in front and/or rear door and stairs.
- Inadequate lights in the basement, hallways, stairs, and common areas.
- Loose or crumbling asbestos on the property.
- Missing or damaged discharge pipes on all water heaters.
- Open, loose, damaged, or incorrectly wired junction boxes.
- Loose/missing cover for electric panel. Fuses and circuit breaker boxes properly protected with spacers.
- Oil line not secured or presents a trip hazard. Copper fuel line not in a PVC conduit (oil line must be covered).
- Lawnmowers, snow blowers, motorcycles, etc. stored in the basement.
- Trash/garbage in the front and back yards.
- Property within the lot line has rubbish, junk, unregistered cars, etc.
- Inoperable smoke detector on any level of the building, including attic, basement, and all hallways.

Please remember to check for other items in need of repair prior to our inspection. This will save you time and prevent additional inspections. Questions? Contact Erik Sundsted, MBHP Market Analyst, at 617-425-6711. 🍀