

August 19, 2024

Dear Mayor Bowser,

We are writing to ask you to halt the exits of families in rapid re-housing until the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the D.C. Housing Authority (DCHA) can complete the housing voucher eligibility and lease-up process for the significant number of vouchers that are available now or by October 1. It has long been the policy of DHS to pause exits for families connected (or about to be connected) to a permanent housing resource.

As you know, on July 11 DCHA [approved a special preference](#) for families exiting rapid re-housing, up to 1,300 Housing Choice Vouchers, saying: “The preference is intended to *prevent such families from losing their housing assistance* when their [rapid re-housing] subsidy ends.” The preference is limited to families “whose participation in [rapid re-housing] is ending between May 1, 2024, and July 31, 2024, due to time limits for assistance and/or program expiration.” In addition, the D.C. Council dedicated 451 new housing vouchers to families exiting rapid re-housing in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget in order to prevent families from facing eviction and homelessness upon exit. Thanks to the work of DHS, DCHA, and the D.C. Council to secure these resources, almost every family who has been in rapid re-housing for at least twelve months can be exited to a permanent housing voucher, ensuring continued and long-term housing stability for thousands of D.C. families.

With this plan now in place, we ask you to maintain families in rapid re-housing – including restoring rapid re-housing rental assistance to those who have been terminated – until they are able to lease up with a voucher. This is consistent with the long-term DHS practice of not exiting families from rapid re-housing if they have been found eligible for permanent housing programs. It does not make sense to exit families from a rental assistance program they rely on, knowing that they will be connected to a new program in a matter of months. In the interim, nearly all families will get behind on rent, and landlords will suffer from unpaid rent at a time when rental delinquencies are especially high. Landlords may initiate eviction proceedings, creating an unnecessary burden for renters and landlords. Families will face harms of worsened credit records, needing to deal with an eviction notice – and possibly actual eviction – when they should be focused on securing their voucher and a place to use it.

We request that you direct DHS to halt exits, reinstate anyone who has already been terminated, and pause any appeals of exits until families have been successfully transferred and leased up with all housing vouchers that are currently or imminently available for these families. We know that your administration can move quickly to house D.C. residents when all hands are on deck—we have seen you do it before. But that will not be possible if DHS and rapid re-housing providers remain focused on exiting families and defending appeals.

We know that you share our goal that all D.C. families have safe, stable housing. Your agencies and the D.C. Council identified long-term vouchers to help make that goal a reality for nearly 2,000 families facing exit from rapid re-housing. However, if DHS continues moving forward

with exits and cutting off rental assistance before those families can be connected to a voucher, not only will families still lose their housing stability, but there will also be significant costs to the District, to landlords, and to other D.C. residents. D.C will see increased family shelter usage, which is more expensive than housing support; decreased willingness by landlords to rent to families in rapid re-housing, making it harder to exit families from shelter; greater number of at-risk children in school, with higher attendant costs; and greater difficulty finding new housing for families who will now have evictions on their records.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue further with your office.

Sincerely,

See attached list of 80 organizations and 480 individuals

CC: Laura Zeilinger, Director, Department of Human Services
Keith Pettigrew, Executive Director, D.C. Housing Authority
Theresa Silla, Executive Director, Interagency Council on Homelessness

Organizations:

1. ACLU DC
2. Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.
3. ANC 1C03
4. ANC 7C06
5. Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
6. Ayuda
7. Baldwin House Cooperative Association
8. Black Swan Academy
9. Bread for the City
10. Building Cooperative Communities
11. Capital Stonewall Democrats
12. Central American Resource Center
13. Children's Law Center
14. Coalition for the Homeless
15. DC Action
16. DC Bar Pro Bono Center
17. DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
18. DC Communist Party, CPUSA
19. DC for Democracy
20. DC Fiscal Policy Institute
21. DC Jobs With Justice
22. DC Justice Lab
23. DC KinCare Alliance
24. DC SAFE
25. DC Statehood Green Party
26. DC Volunteer Lawyers Project
27. Disability Rights DC
28. Empower DC
29. EmpowerEd
30. Equal Rights Center
31. Eunnae at Law PLLC
32. Fair Budget Coalition
33. The Festival Center
34. First Congregational UCC, DC
35. First Shift Justice Project
36. Grassroots DC
37. Jews United for Justice
38. Just Breathe Love & Support
39. Justice and Witness Action Network DC team
40. Kamey Law PLLC
41. Latin American Youth Center
42. Legal Aid DC

43. Legal Counsel for the Elderly
44. Mamatoto Village
45. Metropolitan Educational Solutions, LLC
46. Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid
47. Mother's Outreach Network
48. My Sister's Place
49. National Center for Housing & Child Welfare
50. National Coalition for the Homeless
51. National Homelessness Law Center
52. National Lawyers Guild, DC Chapter
53. Network for Victim Recovery of DC
54. Open City Advocates
55. Our Daily Bread
56. Pathways to Housing DC
57. People for Fairness Coalition
58. Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ
59. Playtime Project
60. Positive Force DC
61. Restaurant Opportunities Center of DC
62. Rising for Justice
63. Sanctuary DMV
64. Save Chinatown Solidarity Network
65. Save Us Now Inc
66. SchoolHouse Connection
67. Small Multifamily Owners Association
68. SOME, Inc. (So Others Might Eat)
69. SPACES In Action
70. Street Health DC
71. Sunrise DC
72. Tzedek DC
73. United Planning Organization
74. Ward 7 Food Center
75. Washington Interfaith Network
76. Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
77. Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
78. We Are Family Senior Outreach Network
79. Who Speaks for Me?
80. Yachad

Individuals:

1. Stefanie Abramowitz
2. Terri Acker
3. Allison Acosta

4. Greg Afinogenov
5. Karen Agresti
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7. Jane Ahrens
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15. Ben Barge
16. Mackenzie Baris
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42. Karlia Brown
43. Laura Brown
44. Shannon Brown
45. Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza
46. Terry Burroughs

47. Susan Burton
48. Elizabeth Buss
49. Jamie Butler
50. Jennifer Callaghan
51. Flor Canales
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55. AJ Cho
56. Jay Cho
57. Sarah Cho
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61. Ellen Conover
62. Latinique Cooper
63. John Copacino, Georgetown Criminal Justice Clinic
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65. Dylan Craig
66. Akela Crawford
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76. Emily Devereaux
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108. Allison Fisher
109. Erik Fisher
110. Kiley Fisher
111. Latasha Fogle
112. Kimya Forouzan
113. Farah Fosse
114. Debbie Fox
115. Talia Frank
116. Shawn Fremstad
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118. Laura Fuchs, DCPS teacher
119. Patricia Mullahy Fugere
120. Joshua Fuller
121. Benyel Fulton
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129. Meaghan Gemar
130. Rev. Barbara Gerlach
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132. Talia Gilbert

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