

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2024

The Honorable Adrienne Todman
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Acting Secretary Todman:

As Nevada faces an ongoing affordable housing crisis, we write to request that the Department of Housing and Urban Development increase the Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority's (SNRHA) Housing Choice Vouchers allocation by 10,000 vouchers over five years, and provide greater flexibility in the administration of these vouchers. Doing so would enhance the effectiveness of the current project-based voucher system and allow SNRHA to better tackle the unique housing affordability challenges in Nevada. We also urge the swift consideration of waivers relating to the program cap, project cap, selection process, and portability of the project-based vouchers provided to Nevada's public housing authorities.

Nevada's shortage of affordable housing has reached a critical point that demands immediate action to reduce the strain on hardworking families. The need for increased housing resources is most acute for low-income households, with research showing that over ninety percent of individuals whose incomes are at or below 30 percent of the area median income spend nearly half of their monthly income on rent. Additional support is required to prevent families from having to make the impossible choice between remaining in their homes or affording other necessities like nutritious food and health care.

The housing shortage and affordability crisis affects almost all Nevadans, but it is having a disproportionate impact on some of our most vulnerable populations: low-income families and seniors. These individuals, already facing significant challenges, must compete for a severely limited supply of affordable housing. According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition's 2024 Gap Report, extremely low-income renters in Las Vegas face the most severe shortage in the country, with only 13 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 households. This lack of access to affordable housing has led many Nevadans to seek assistance through the Housing Choice Voucher Program, with the SNRHA waitlist for a unit currently exceeding 42,000 individuals and continuing to grow.

Given these alarming trends, SNRHA has been adapting its practices and utilizing innovative solutions to better address the needs of Nevada residents. An affordable housing crisis of this magnitude requires a whole-of-government approach and consistent coordination of state and federal housing efforts. At the very minimum, it is critical to ensure that existing federal programs like the Housing Choice Voucher Program are working on the ground. In Nevada, existing region-specific obstacles hinder the success of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Primarily, Nevada does not have enough vouchers to meet demand. SNRHA's voucher allocation has grown only 4.4 percent in the last four years despite surges in housing uncertainty and robust population expansion of 6.5 percent. Additionally, current voucher guidelines require SNRHA to use most of their voucher allocation for tenant-based vouchers, which have a limited impact in Nevada, given limited participation from local landlords in the program. While we applaud SNRHA on their many efforts to incentivize landlords to accept tenant-based vouchers, enabling SNRHA to expand its provision of project-based vouchers would motivate more landlords to participate, thus expanding the reach of the program lower housing costs and helping more Nevadans find affordable housing.

As the Department of Housing and Urban Development contemplates strategies to lower housing costs, we ask that you prioritize the Administration’s commitment in its Blueprint for a Renters Bill of Rights that “renters should have access to housing that is safe, decent, and affordable and should pay no more than 30 percent of household income on housing costs.” With a particular focus on alleviating the cost burden of rent, and given the unique challenges present in Nevada, we respectfully request that you consider taking the following actions:

1. Increase the Housing Choice Voucher allocation for SNRHA by an additional 10,000 vouchers over the next five years;
2. Approve a waiver request for SNRHA to increase the project-based voucher program cap up to 50 percent of its total Annual Contributions Contract;
3. Waive the 25 percent project cap for SNRHA to allow these vouchers to be utilized for up to 50 percent of units within a project;
4. Provide a waiver to SNRHA to implement an alternative competitive process for awarding their project-based vouchers so more tenants and landlords can take advantage of this program and obtain relief from high housing costs; and
5. Waive SNRHA’s requirement to issue a tenant-based voucher at 12 months and extend the timeframe to 24 months.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you to ensure the Housing Choice Voucher Program works to lower housing costs for Nevada families.

Sincerely,



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator