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To: SMHA Board of Commissioners
FR: Josh Crites, Executive Director
RE: Change to Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Waitlist
Date: March 16, 2023

I. Current Issue: Stark County, Ohio has a large number of individuals in the community that are considered rent burdened. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, affordability means that a household will pay no more than 30% of its gross annual income on housing. Families who pay more than that are considered “cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.” According to the Stark County Comprehensive Plan, “While housing and the overall cost of living in Stark County compares favorably to many communities, it can still be difficult to make ends meet for low- to moderate-income persons. During research for the 2014 Stark County Consolidated Plan, the most common housing problem faced by low- to moderate-income persons locally was housing cost burden. Using the standard definition for affordable housing, SCRPC found that 53% of those at 0–80% of adjusted median income have a housing cost burden.

In addition, SMHA staff have noticed that when the Housing Choice Voucher program pulls off the waitlist, a high number of those pulled are coming from subsidized Public Housing units. These are individuals.

II. Policy Option: The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority (SMHA) is considering adding a new preference for its Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. To ensure the authority is prioritizing families in Stark County who are extremely rent burdened, the agency proposes to implement a rent burden priority. This priority is allowable by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and would help the authority meet its mission of housing the most vulnerable in our community.

III: HUD Policy Definition: HUD’s definition for a rent burden preference is as follows: “Rent burden preference” means the federal preference for admission of applicants that pay more than 50 percent of family income for rent. (2) For purposes of determining whether an applicant qualifies for the rent burden preference: (i) “Family income” means Monthly Income, as defined in 24 CFR 813.102. (ii) “Rent” means: (A) The actual monthly amount due under a lease or occupancy agreement between a family and the family’s current landlord; and (B) For utilities purchased directly by tenants from utility providers: (1) The utility allowance for family purchased utilities and services that is used in the HA tenant-based program; or (2) If the family chooses, the average monthly payments that the family actually made for these utilities and services for the most recent 12-month period or, if information is not obtainable for the entire period, for an appropriate recent period. (iii) Amounts paid to or on behalf of a family under any energy assistance program must be subtracted from the otherwise applicable rental amount, to the extent

Mission Statement

The Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority provides eligible residents of Stark County with decent, safe and affordable housing. Contributing to nourishing neighborhoods by working in partnership with the public and private sectors.



that they are not included in the family's income. (iv) For purposes of the Section 8 Certificate/Voucher programs, rent for an applicant who owns a manufactured home, but rents the space upon which it is located, includes the monthly payment to amortize the purchase price of the home, calculated in accordance with HUD's requirements. In addition, for this program, rent for members of a cooperative means the charges under the occupancy agreement between the members and the cooperative. (3) An applicant does not qualify for a rent burden preference if either of the following is applicable: (i) The applicant has been paying more than 50 percent of income for rent for less than 90 days. (ii) The applicant is paying more than 50 percent of family income to rent a unit because the applicant's housing assistance for occupancy of the unit under any of the following programs has been terminated because of the applicant's refusal to comply with applicable program policies and procedures on the occupancy of underoccupied and overcrowded units: (A) The Section 8 programs or public and Indian housing programs under the United States Housing Act of 1937.

IV: Impacts: Staff believe that this proposed policy would ensure the authority is prioritizing the most rent burdened in Stark County. Another impact could be those who are living in already subsidized Public Housing or Affordable Housing properties. Public Housing residents pay 30% of their income towards rent. By definition, those individuals/families are not rent burdened and thus would not be prioritized when waitlist pulls are made. Once all of the rent burdened families/individuals and veterans are pulled off the waitlist, then the public housing residents would be prioritized.

V: Staff Recommendation: Creating a new waiting list preference can be complex and have unintended consequences. Staff do understand that public housing residents would be most impacted by this proposed policy change. However, the benefit would be reaching more rent burdened residents in Stark County at a faster rate than we are currently able to do. Staff recommend moving forward with this proposed policy change. This would be vetted with a public comment period before coming to your board in April with the goal of implementing in May.