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BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND COMMISSION MEETING

(Webex)

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

BEFORE: DAVID BOWERS, President

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- JALAL GREENE
- SHANNON SNOW
- VERNADINE KIMBALL
- ILETHA JOYNES
- TISHA GUTHRIE
- VERNADINE KIMBALL
- MATT HILL
- CINDY PLAVIER-TRUITT

Reported by:

Roland Thomas Bowman, III

1 Also Present:

2 STEPHANI ESTRADA, Project Coordinator, Affordable Housing
Trust Fund, DHCD

3 TISHA EDWARDS, Executive Director, Mayor's Office of
4 Children and Family Success

5 JOHN MOBLEY, Program Manager, Affordable Housing Trust
Fund, DHCD

6 DANISE JONES-DORSEY, Moderator

7 ANGELA WHITAKER, Director, Baltimore City Community
8 Action Partnership

9 NICK CALACE, Public Housing Program

10 CORLISS ALSTON, Senior Vice President, Housing Choice
Voucher Program

11 AMY HENNEN, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service

12 SCOTT GOTTBREHT, Associate Vice President, Homeless
13 Services, United Way of Central Maryland

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Office of People's Counsel

15 JANET ABRAHAMS, Executive Director, HABC

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INDEX

Page

Meeting Called to Order by Chairman Bowers	4
Roll Call	4
Approval of September Minutes	6
Department Updates	7
Presentations (Moderated by Ms. Jones-Dorsey)	23
Public Comment	71
Other Business	74
Adjournment	77

P R O C E E D I N G S

(6:02 p.m.)

1
2
3 PRESIDENT BOWERS: My name is David Bowers. I
4 am the President of the Baltimore City Affordable Housing
5 Trust Fund Commission. It is Tuesday, October 27, 2020,
6 6:02 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, and I'm calling our
7 meeting, our public meeting to order.

8 I want to welcome everyone who is watching us
9 online. I want to thank everyone who has joined us here,
10 our guests. We have several guests here this evening.
11 And want to thank, as always, Department staff as well as
12 the team that is recording this session.

13 We will start off everyone should have for
14 Commission Members I want to thank you for joining us
15 this evening as always. So we have done our call to
16 order.

17 Let me by way to see if we have a quorum. I
18 will call names of Commission Members. If you are
19 present, if you could indicate by doing so. You could
20 all take your cells off mute while we do this.

21 Iletha Joynes.

1 MS. JOYNES: Present.

2 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Joynes is present.

3 Thank you.

4 Matt Hill.

5 MR. HILL: Present.

6 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Matt Hill is present. Thank

7 you.

8 Shannon Snow.

9 MS. SNOW: Present.

10 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Snow is present. Thank you.

11 Jalal Greene.

12 MR. GREENE: Present.

13 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Jay Greene is present.

14 Cindy Plavier-Truitt.

15 MS. PLAVIER-TRUITT: Present.

16 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Truitt is present.

17 Thank you.

18 Tisha Guthrie.

19 MS. GUTHRIE: Present.

20 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Guthrie is present.

21 Thank you.

1 Ms. Vernadine Kimball.

2 MS. KIMBALL: Present.

3 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Kimball is present.

4 Thank you.

5 Did I miss any Commission Members?

6 Okay. Looks like we do have an establishment
7 of a quorum. So I want to again thank you all for being
8 with us this evening.

9 So a quorum being established, we will move
10 into an approval of the notes, the minutes from the
11 September meeting, which were sent out again by
12 departmental staff. Thank you, Stephani. So, I would
13 ask Commission Members, if you haven't already, to review
14 those minutes; and if there are any corrections that need
15 to be made, let us know. Otherwise, we'll entertain a
16 motion to approve and accept.

17 MR. HILL: So moved.

18 MR. GREENE: Second.

19 PRESIDENT BOWERS: That was Matt Hill that
20 moved, and who made the second?

21 MR. GREENE: Jay Greene.

1 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Jay Greene made the second
2 to accept.

3 Any discussion?

4 All right. All in favor of approving the
5 September 2020 minutes, Commission Members signifying by
6 saying aye.

7 COMMISSION MEMBERS: Aye.

8 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Opposed nay.

9 Any abstentions?

10 Okay. Thank you. So the minutes are approved.

11 Now, we will move over to our -- and I will
12 just ask by way of housekeeping for folks on the line, if
13 you don't mind keeping your phones on mute until it's
14 time for you to speak, we'd appreciate that.

15 So now, we will go to departmental updates, and
16 I will turn it over to Mr. John Mobley and other
17 Department staff for the updates.

18 MR. MOBLEY: Hello?

19 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Yeah.

20 MR. MOBLEY: Can you all hear me?

21 PRESIDENT BOWERS: We can, yes, John, we can.

1 MR. MOBLEY: Okay. Let's go ahead and start
2 the presentation.

3 All right. Welcome to the October 27, 2020,
4 Affordable Housing Trust Fund Commission Meeting. We are
5 going to be going over the financials through September
6 2020.

7 Let's go to the next slide. First, we'll talk
8 about Trust Fund revenue, and we'll talk about Trust Fund
9 expenditures, and we'll talk a bit about the NOFAs and
10 RFPs that are outstanding for the Community Land Trust
11 and Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Then we'll talk about
12 the Affordable Housing Trust Fund financial statements.

13 Revenue collected to date by fiscal year is
14 \$17,700,989 rounded to a few cents. You can see by year
15 the breakdown of the revenue collection. This is not --
16 yeah. You can see the breakdown of revenue collection
17 by fiscal year so far.

18 Next slide, please. The way that it's broken
19 down is by the received tax revenue, and the DHCD
20 contributions. DHCD has contributed three and a half
21 million dollars in this year, and two million dollars in

1 the prior two years for this. And you can see the fund
2 and dollar percentage splits for tax revenue and
3 departmental contribution.

4 Next slide. So July through September 2020.
5 In July 2020, there were 29 transactions that resulted in
6 a monthly revenue of \$1,148,775. In August 2020, there
7 were 11 transactions that resulted in \$355,577. And in
8 September 2020, there were 18 transactions that resulted
9 in a monthly revenue of \$98,547.

10 Next slide, please. For a year-over-year
11 analysis, to date -- I mean, for the year, there have
12 been 58 transactions, which have given a total revenue as
13 shown in total above, and this is a comparison year-over-
14 year, between last year in FY 20 and July through
15 September, and the current year FY 20 -- 21, July through
16 September.

17 Next slide, please. This month, September
18 2020, was a month that our revenue came in a bit under
19 what we projected on average per month. Some months we
20 believe are going to be over. This month was
21 significantly under the revised projection for the month

1 as we recover \$98,547, when on average we're expecting
2 quite a bit more.

3 Next slide. Our commitments and expenditures
4 for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, have -- are shown
5 right here. We show the amount that we've actually
6 spent, which is \$378,908 on labor and operations and
7 administration, and to our partners that we have. And
8 then we show the current commitments that we have
9 outstanding, which include the \$2.75 million to MOCFS or
10 MOHS, and some of our other outstanding commitments,
11 which total about \$5.2 million that we have committed,
12 but they just haven't gone out the door yet. So you can
13 see what we have available after we take away what we've
14 actually sent out the door, and the commitments made, and
15 you can see that in dollar and percentage form.

16 Next slide. So let's move on to the Community
17 Land Trust, Single-Family Home Ownership NOFA. This is a
18 NOFA that was put out to the public, and requesting
19 applications. The amount of funds available was
20 \$2 million, and the submission deadline was 10/23, which
21 was last Friday. We received six submissions,

1 applications submitted, and the total funds requested was
2 \$3,530,000. So we're going to have to figure out how to
3 make that work with a budget of \$2 million, initial
4 budget of \$2 million on the NOFA.

5 The Community Land Trust Consultant RFP, which
6 was sent out back in April, and we -- as we said before,
7 we've received one submission in response to this RFP,
8 and we awarded Grounded Solutions the contract. The
9 contract is -- we've notified them of an award -- excuse
10 me. And we're working on a contract, and which will be
11 submitted to the Board of Estimates, what we assume is in
12 the early November period for approval.

13 Next slide, please. The inclusionary housing
14 RFP, we -- for consultants, we received two submissions.
15 The applicants have been interviewed again. So we spoke
16 to them -- the review panel has spoke to them. The
17 applications have been scored based on the answers and
18 what has been submitted for the application. And the
19 final award is not made yet, but it's being made. The
20 award recommendation is being made. Excuse me.

21 The New Construction Preservation of Existing

1 Housing NOFA, the amount that was originally set aside
2 for this NOFA was \$2 million. The total number of
3 submissions received was 10. The total funds requested
4 though was about \$5.5 million, and the recommended -- we
5 have recommended projects for awards, and we'll talk
6 about that in just a second. And the applicants have
7 received verbal notification whether they may or not.

8 So the awardees, there were four applicants,
9 have been awarded funds. The Affordable Housing Trust
10 Fund units that will benefit from these funds
11 specifically is 127 units, and the total amount that we
12 are recommending for award is just slightly over the
13 2 million to make sure that our -- that the projects were
14 fully funded at 2,059,500. We didn't want to leave
15 something unfunded, so that's why it came out not to the
16 exact dollar amount, but very close. The average award
17 per unit is \$16,216.54, if you break up the \$2 million
18 over the 127 units that are being supported by the
19 Affordable Housing Trust Funds.

20 So if we're talking about the entire building,
21 the entire impact of the funds, it's going -- the

1 Affordable Housing Trust Funds are going into projects
2 that create 271 total units. So some of them are going
3 to be for Affordable Housing Trust Fund people at and
4 below 30.50 percent of AMI, but the entire project is
5 just, if we talk about that as an aggregate, 271 units
6 are going to be generated because of the Affordable
7 Housing Trust Funds. The total development cost for all
8 of the projects all together that we are putting our
9 dollars into is \$92,312,681. So we have leveraged our
10 funds at a 44.82 to 1 ratio, if we were to look at it
11 like that.

12 The awarded projects before that we talked
13 about are listed here. We talk about their benefits.
14 But you can see the award for each of the projects, and
15 this will be up on the website. So people -- everyone
16 can feel free to read through, and see the -- what was
17 written about them or a small, small subject, small
18 description about the projects themselves.

19 So next slide, please. The projects that were
20 not recommended for an award; six applicants were not
21 recommended for an award. There are varying reasons for

1 them. But the next steps for the applications that were
2 not recommended for awards, please feel free to schedule
3 a 30-minute debriefing with the DHCD staff.

4 Next slide. And last, but certainly not least,
5 are the financial statements for the Affordable Housing
6 Trust Fund. We issued solicitations to 10 accounting
7 firms in the Baltimore City area or in Baltimore City
8 specifically. We asked firms to send us an application
9 with basic information for us to make a decision about
10 who would create the financial statements. The firms --
11 some firms asked questions via e-mail, and we wrote back.
12 But in the end, no firms applied for the opportunity.
13 This is a little perplexing. So we followed up with
14 questions. Follow-up questions were sent to the
15 applicants. So we want to figure out why didn't people
16 apply? And we will have some info on that once we get
17 word back.

18 That's the end of the presentation today.

19 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Mr. Mobley, thank you.

20 Appreciate that very much.

21 For Members of the Commission, anyone have any

1 questions for Mr. Mobley?

2 MS. SNOW: Yeah. Hi, David. Shannon Snow
3 here. And, John, question for you. In your presentation
4 you were talking about 5.2 million already committed.
5 Can you provide a little more detail on that?

6 MR. MOBLEY: I can give a full breakdown by
7 line item, but it includes the \$2.75 million for COVID --
8 COVID and homelessness prevention. It includes
9 commitments that were made to some land trusts that are
10 outstanding. It includes, like I said, a full breakdown
11 is probably best; not just to recite off the top of my
12 head. So that way it's in a concrete format.

13 MS. SNOW: Does that include the two million of
14 the new construction award?

15 MR. MOBLEY: Yes, it does.

16 MS. SNOW: Okay. That makes sense then.

17 PRESIDENT BOWERS: All right. Other questions
18 does the Commission have?

19 MS. GUTHRIE: Hi, Mr. Mobley. This is Tisha
20 Guthrie. Just a quick question about those who -- those
21 projects that were not submitted for -- to be backed by

1 the funding, after they do have their, I guess, one-on-
2 one to offer some feedback, will there be resources made
3 available for them if there are barriers that they faced
4 that otherwise would have deemed them eligible for the
5 funding?

6 MR. MOBLEY: Well, I think the intent is in the
7 30-minute debriefing we can have conversations as to how
8 possibly we can -- they can improve their application.
9 So that way -- and what we're looking to do in the
10 future. So maybe it can be better result next time,
11 hopefully. But depending on the applicants that we
12 received. I mean, this time we had a budget of
13 \$2 million and \$5.5 million of applicants -- of requests.
14 So, I mean, we will obviously try to give some feedback.

15 MS. GUTHRIE: Thank you.

16 MR. GREENE: This is Jay Greene. Yeah, we will
17 look at maybe other potential funding, but the Department
18 may have to see if that's a possibility. So we will just
19 go through that process with each of them, and for some
20 that may be a possibility. And as John indicated, give
21 them feedback so that the next round the results may be

1 different.

2 One of the things that we are thinking about is
3 to try to get out another round because there's still
4 some funding. I think John can help me out here. Is
5 about 1.7 remaining in this bucket. Our thought is to
6 try to get another NOFA out on the street as quickly as
7 possible, maybe as soon as December, so that we can have
8 another funding round in early second quarter of next
9 year.

10 MR. MOBLEY: Absolutely.

11 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Other questions?

12 Matt Hill.

13 MR. HILL: Yeah, this is Matt Hill. Just two
14 questions. Following up on the awards for the new
15 construction, I think previously the Department had said
16 it would make available a little more detail about the
17 projects, the scores that they received, and kind of -- I
18 think, Shannon, you had spoken of this before about just
19 kind of debriefing on how -- on reflections on how the
20 scoring and application process went for purposes of
21 looking at the next time. So is that still going to

1 happen? And then I'll just go with my second question,
2 which is that if the Community Land Trust, you said there
3 were applications for \$2 million worth of funds. No.
4 I'm sorry. There were \$3.5 million applied for, but only
5 \$2 million available. Has the Department given any
6 consideration -- because I think the bucket for this
7 Community Land Trust pot is something like 6 million, if
8 my memory is right. Has the Department considered
9 increasing the potential funds from 2 million to 3
10 million or something like that?

11 MR. MOBLEY: Can I -- let me respond to that.
12 Matt, I hear your point, and that's a good point for us
13 to consider, and if we have quality applications, we will
14 keep open that possibility. But let's go through the
15 process of reviewing the applications, and with our
16 consultant, and, again, if we have quality applications
17 that require more funding than the 2 million, we
18 certainly will look at that. Just like we can --
19 slightly more than 2 million this time. It was pretty
20 close. It just worked out that way. So hear you, and we
21 will keep that possibility open.

1 MR. HILL: Thank you.

2 PRESIDENT BOWERS: One last thing as we move on
3 in the agenda. Is the -- for the Department one of the
4 things we've talked about, and I think as the debriefs
5 happen in our future meetings one of the things we'd ask
6 for is to -- the Department to look for if there are any
7 themes that emerge in terms of those who got funded, and
8 also those who did not get funded. So if there are
9 things as it relates to whether for the Department itself
10 or the larger echo system of nonprofit and for-profit
11 providers and funders and others, if there are certain
12 types of technical assistance folks need or certain types
13 of operating subsidies or capital, et cetera, that folks
14 are looking for in the marketplace that are making these
15 projects happen or barriers to getting -- meeting
16 thresholds on applications. Any sorts of themes that you
17 all may see that you could bring back and share with us
18 would be helpful as we consider ways that as we engage
19 not only with the Department but the larger kind of
20 ecosystem of stakeholders, conversations that may be
21 helpful to get folks not only prepared to apply and be

1 successful on this, but, again, this notion of kind of
2 stretching dollars and resources that are out there.

3 So, Mr. Mobley and Jay, thank you all for that.
4 Really appreciate it.

5 So we will now transition to the next part of
6 our agenda. We've got a -- we are really fortunate this
7 evening. We've got several guests here tonight. In the
8 printed agenda folks will see that we do have
9 representatives from Baltimore City Community Action
10 Partnership and DHS and the Housing Authority, the
11 Maryland Volunteer Lawyer Service, Maryland Legal Aid,
12 Office of People's Council and United Way 211. And we
13 are fortunate to night to have Ms. Danise Jones-Dorsey
14 here as our guest moderator for the evening. We really
15 appreciate her coming in; a former Executive Director, My
16 Brother's Keeper. At one point in her career, a Deputy
17 Director at the Housing Authority, and other things
18 throughout her journey of service in the City.

19 And so I'm actually going to turn over to
20 Commissioner Matt Hill, and I want to acknowledge and
21 thank him for the work that he did in helping to really

1 pull together a session together, and say a word about
2 kind of what's behind the reasoning behind this, and what
3 we will hear from -- hear about tonight, and then we'll
4 turn it over to Ms. Dorsey.

5 Matt Hill.

6 MR. HILL: Thanks, David. So, yes. I just
7 want to say thank you all for coming and participating.
8 I know that we're all dealing with COVID epidemic as best
9 we can, and it's an incredibly stressful time for our
10 clients, and for the people who we're working with, who
11 are experiencing housing instability and utility shut-
12 offs in a way that I don't think our City has ever seen
13 before. So we're -- you all are on the front lines of
14 that, and we really appreciate you coming here tonight to
15 share your experiences. The Housing Trust Fund has made
16 money available to support that work, particularly with
17 respect to the CAP Centers. And so we wanted to -- I
18 think some of the -- what I hear in my conversation is
19 that there is something about a lack of knowledge of what
20 each agency is doing, and how they can best assist
21 tenants, and work together to make sure that we're

1 providing the best assistance that we can in our
2 respective fields.

3 So I look forward to helping get the word out,
4 and looking for ways that we can partner together to
5 continue this important work. So I'll stop there.

6 Thank you, David, and thank you, Ms. Jones-
7 Dorsey for moderating.

8 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Matt, thank you so much,
9 Matt.

10 One more quick word, just couple words on
11 housekeeping, and I'll turn to Ms. Dorsey.

12 One, we did ask participants on tonight's panel
13 to answer some questions ahead of time in written form.
14 So they will not only be part of the formal record of
15 this meeting, but part of the thinking behind this
16 gathering is to pull information together that could be
17 shared beyond tonight's meeting. And so we'll be having
18 some brief conversation after this meeting, and working
19 on how we compile the written answers that have been
20 provided, and make them publicly available, and folks can
21 disseminate them out. And so we'll be talking to some

1 stakeholders about how to do that, and make that public.

2 So thank you all for the written answers.

3 Housekeeping as well for the Commission
4 Members. We've asked, again, a reminder for Ms. Dorsey
5 and our guests to go for about a half an hour on some
6 questions she'll have for them. About the half-hour
7 mark, I will chime in, and then ask Commission Members if
8 there are comments, questions, you all have. And then
9 for the balance of the last 30 minutes, we'll kind of tag
10 team with our guests and Ms. Dorsey, and any other
11 questions Commission Members may have.

12 So with that, Ms. Danise Jones-Dorsey, we turn
13 it over to you. And thank you again.

14 I think you're on mute, Ms. Dorsey.

15 MS. DORSEY: Good evening, and thank you all
16 for being her, and particularly the Agency
17 representatives. I know that you have had a long day.
18 This has been a very demanding time. COVID-19 is so
19 unorthodox. And we just appreciate your responsiveness
20 and your nimbleness. And the truth is, as I have shared
21 with Douglas, the Commission wants to know what else can

1 be done, needs to be done? So we're not just looking for
2 an accounting of our resources, we also need to know from
3 you if you have a need for additional resources so we can
4 figure out how we can bring those to you.

5 I was struck by the responses that each of you
6 gave, and I decided that rather than asking you to repeat
7 those comments at tonight's meeting, as you heard
8 earlier, those comments are going to be compiled, and
9 will be published and circulated by 211, our United Way
10 partners. So I wanted to ask you some additional
11 information. And if you have any comments that you want
12 to put in the chat, please do so.

13 Here are the two questions that I was struck
14 with. One, it was clear to me that your -- the
15 constituencies that you serve are restricted by
16 regulation and guideline, and may not be the full
17 universe of people who need resources from COVID-19. So
18 it would be important for the Commissioners to hear who
19 you are not able to serve; one, because your guidelines
20 restrict you from serving them; and, two, because you
21 don't have enough resources.

1 Was the question clear? It's a two-part
2 question.

3 Okay. Douglas, would you go first, please?

4 MR. GIBBONS: Sure.

5 MS. DORSEY: And would you identify which
6 agency you're with, please?

7 MR. GIBBONS: So I'm Douglas Gibbons, II. I'm
8 a staff attorney at Maryland Legal Aid. We are a
9 nonprofit law firm. We have people who are low income
10 dealing with their civil legal matters. Most importantly
11 where I am more involved and is when it comes to housing
12 issues. When it comes to the obstacles in terms of
13 reaching out to people, one of the things we find during
14 this pandemic is that there are a lot of folks who are
15 dealing with a technical gap. We are now more relying on
16 computers and phones, sometimes even faxes to communicate
17 with one another. But we know there are a population of
18 people, who don't have computers, who may be illiterate
19 in some of these novel technologies that we're utilizing.
20 And so while it is helpful in order to use technology to
21 maintain our social distance, there are occasions where

1 we actually have to see each other in person to deliver
2 our services.

3 And so one of the things that we've done at the
4 Maryland Legal Aid is that we're trying our best to still
5 find ways to meet people in person, if need be, in a safe
6 way, whether it's in our offices or some of our attorneys
7 who are part of our community lawyering initiative that
8 used to go to libraries and -- or set up shop within
9 schools, but now since a lot of schools and libraries are
10 closed, are still holding those meetings outdoors. So
11 they can still provide that brief advice for those who
12 that may be the one way they can speak to an attorney,
13 get some type of free legal advice, and even potential
14 representation.

15 But in terms of what we can do, I think we're
16 all being challenged by -- how we can better serve or
17 constituency. I think if anything --

18 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Mr. Gibbons, Mr. Gibbons,
19 I'm sorry, Mr. Gibbons. Just hold on one second.

20 MR. GIBBONS: Yeah.

21 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Thank you. Yeah, I think we

1 got -- thank you, Matt, on mute. Go ahead. I just
2 wanted to make sure we were all on mute there. Thanks so
3 much. Keep going.

4 MR. GIBBONS: No problem. No problem. I would
5 just add though that I think the more we're able to work
6 together to share the resources that we have the better.
7 Even Legal Aid as much as we do try to provide, there are
8 certain folks who we may not be able to help. So, for
9 example, individuals who have certain, let's say they may
10 be of an undocumented status, for example. We may not be
11 able to serve due to our federal funding guidelines. Or
12 even individuals for whom there may be a conflict
13 interest because we may have helped somebody in their
14 past and, therefore, we, as a ethical -- we can't help.
15 But in those situations, we rely on some of our partner
16 legal service organizations such as Public Justice Center
17 or with the Pro Bono Resource Help Center.

18 We do our best to work together as a advocates
19 community. And I think the more that we as advocates
20 work with other organizations, like say the Community
21 Action partnership, that is able to reach out to folks,

1 let them know that they are attorneys there to help them
2 out or at least to answer their questions, I think the
3 better.

4 Did that get to the gist of your two-part
5 question?

6 MS. DORSEY: You did, Douglas. Thank you so
7 much. If you have anything else that comes to mind,
8 please note that in the chat box.

9 I would now like to ask Baltimore City
10 Community Action Partner Centers, Partnership Centers, if
11 they would respond. Same question. And you have three
12 minutes. I should have shared that with you as well.

13 MS. WHITAKER: Good evening. My name is Angela
14 Whitaker, and the Director for the Baltimore City
15 Community Action Partnership.

16 What we have noticed with challenge to
17 populations that may -- we may be unable to serve or that
18 may be difficult for us to serve is; one, for clients who
19 are living in unlicensed units, and with landlords, who
20 are unwilling to become licensed.

21 Additionally, we are challenged as is everybody

1 with the physical divide with clients or customers, who
2 don't have access to technology to engage online
3 applications or other online portals.

4 Additionally, what we've come across as a
5 challenge for our service delivery is servicing customers
6 with limited English. With regard to what we can do to
7 address those challenges; one, we are engaging
8 partnerships, partnerships with CBOs who have those
9 relationships with the immigrant population, who can
10 support our efforts to reach out to them to complete
11 applications to ensure that they understand the process,
12 understand the application process, the next steps that
13 they have to take, other documents that they can provide,
14 and substitute for documents that we are requesting. So
15 we are exploring a formal partnership to do that.

16 To support clients who may be impacted by the
17 physical divided, we have instituted a call center. And
18 so we are providing services over the telephone so they
19 can call in to us, let us know what services that they
20 require. We'll mail applications out to them, and then
21 we have drop boxes installed at each of our Community

1 Action Centers where they can bring their applications
2 back, and we check them several times a day to process
3 those applications.

4 And then so to support those clients, who may
5 be living in housing that's unlicensed with landlords who
6 refuse to get licensed, we're also setting up a
7 partnership to support those families to be relocated to
8 other dwellings.

9 MS. DORSEY: Ms. Whitaker, thank you so much.
10 I appreciate that.

11 I'd like to have comments from the Maryland
12 Department of Social Services, please.

13 There's no rep her from DS -- okay. May I have
14 a comment then from HABC? I see the Executive Director
15 is here. Welcome, Ms. Abrahams.

16 MS. ABRAHAMS: Good afternoon. No. Good
17 evening. I'll turn it over. I have Nicholas Calace and
18 I have Corliss Alston. Corliss runs the Section 8
19 Program, and Nick runs the Public Housing Program. So
20 they will both be presenting today.

21 So, Nick.

1 MR. CALACE: Okay. You want me to go first?
2 Okay. So I think the biggest issues we have as far as
3 able to serve for our residents, because we do have a
4 finite group of residents, I have a couple of items.
5 One is the social services that we have are very limited,
6 and they're very much in need right now. There's a lot
7 of issues that are happening. And specifically, a lot of
8 tenants are locked in, shut in, communication has been
9 difficult. We have sent people our -- social service
10 staff that we did have, we sent to at-risk individuals,
11 but it's certainly not enough to go to everyone.

12 We did make an attempt because I know it was
13 mentioned before, I think it was -- everybody has
14 mentioned it. We did have a -- we tried to bridge the
15 technical gap. What we actually did was we sent out a
16 sort of a tenant engagement package where we gave PPE, we
17 gave children's masks adult masks, hand sanitizers,
18 surface sanitizers, disposable thermometers. And the
19 letter that was in the packet was really directed to the
20 kids, who may -- who actually may have more skill in
21 getting on the Internet than the parents because a lot of

1 our social media has a lot of great information on it,
2 and we're finding out we don't get any hits from the
3 residents on it. We were hoping that the kids would
4 basically push this along. It hasn't been as promising
5 as we thought. We are getting some. All right.

6 Two items that I have that are really big as
7 far as the residents themselves, and it's also -- this
8 becomes a question of communication. There's a lot of
9 confusion about the Housing Authority. We're going
10 through great efforts to ensure that if people lose their
11 jobs that we do the interim changes to reduce their rent.
12 The rent is set based upon income. So our contribution
13 as far as resources, if you lose your job, come in
14 quickly, we reduce your rent. This way you're not in an
15 arrearage situation.

16 What we're finding is, is that the confusion we
17 have is the residents believe that with COVID no
18 evictions means you don't have to pay you rent. We're
19 seeing a lot of our residents arrearage go up, and we're
20 trying to work with them on repayment plans, and trying
21 to tell them they have to pay their rent. It would be

1 helpful, maybe, if a third party was to convince them as
2 well, hey, you'd better pay your rent or you'd better go
3 on a payment plan. Because at some point if they lifted
4 the eviction moratorium, we would basically be -- you
5 would be in serious trouble of getting evicted.

6 And the last item I have is something where --
7 I know John can even expand on this more is that positive
8 case knowledge by the Housing Authority staff and the
9 residents that have it put a lot of people at risk. And
10 the communication to basically get the information to the
11 Housing Authority has been limited. And I say that
12 meaning that my staff is going into the units. Other
13 residents may not know people are positive, and that
14 information does not come in any kind of organized
15 fashion to us. It's been difficult for us. We've had
16 scores of tenants, and now we've had dozens of staff
17 people that have basically contracted the disease, and
18 they don't know how much of that could have been
19 prevented from a -- if we have (indiscernible) to the
20 Housing Authority where cases exist so we could deal with
21 targeting that location -- contract tracing or also even,

1 like, issuing out additional PPE, et cetera.

2 Okay. And that's my three minutes.

3 MS. ALSTON: So good evening. My name is
4 Corliss Alston, and I am the Senior Vice President for
5 the Housing Choice Voucher Program. And typically the
6 program is similar to public housing. A participant
7 losses their income. They contact us, and we would make
8 that rent adjustment. What we are seeing is many of our
9 participants, they know how to contact us. We did a lot
10 of communications up front before we closed, saying this
11 how you contact us.

12 The benefit that we've had that has really
13 worked for us is that we were doing some online processes
14 in advance. So our recertifications and interims and all
15 we -- our tenants were used to doing online. So that was
16 a benefit for us. The other benefit was that even though
17 our wait list is closed, we've been actively pulling new
18 applicants from the list, and we've been exhausting phone
19 interviews, e-mails virtual -- using virtual platforms to
20 do interviews and voucher briefings.

21 The thing that we have seem with the technology

1 is that some of our participants haven't been responding
2 so we've resorted to starting in October some limited
3 appointments in the office to complete the
4 recertifications and interims. But to this day, we've
5 completed over 1500 interims due to loss of income.

6 So HUD did give us a few waivers that allowed
7 us to do -- make exceptions, which have really helped us.
8 So I would say we've been able to service a little more
9 than 300 new participants on our program. In terms of
10 not being able to assist other individuals then the
11 recommendation is they kind of look at tax credit units.
12 But as I mentioned, our online processes that we've had
13 in place for over a year were really -- have really
14 enhanced this process for us since during this COVID
15 time. And even with our owners, our owners we have a
16 landlord portal. So we've been able to communicate with
17 them, and informing them that if their tenants get behind
18 contact us so that we can process that change of income.

19 MS. DORSEY: Thank you so much. Ms. Alston,
20 that is very interesting. Tell me a little, just a
21 little bit more about the landlords, please.

1 MS. ALSTON: So we have a landlord portal,
2 which tells our landlords we can post information on all
3 of our programs, updates. We also do mail -- with them
4 so we can send correspondence to them immediately through
5 via the e-mails. But the postings that we put on our
6 portal has advised our landlords to have their tenants in
7 the event that they have loss of income them to contact
8 us to tell -- inform them to contact us, and the
9 information also is shared, like, e-mail addresses, phone
10 numbers, how the tenants can contact the staff through
11 our Call Center. We have a Call Center, and really
12 what's happened is we've taken probably 10,000 calls
13 during this period of time to -- and we've redirected
14 them to staff. And our staff are working remotely. So
15 we've been able to pretty much continue business as
16 normal. But as I mentioned, we talked a little bit about
17 the technology gaps. We have opened our doors for
18 appointments for our participants.

19 But our online processes have really probably
20 kept us kind of steady during this time.

21 MS. DORSEY: Thank you.

1 MS. ALSTON: You're on mute.

2 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Dorsey, you're on mute.

3 MS. DORSEY: Amy, will you make your comment,
4 please?

5 MS. HENNEN: I'd be happy to. My name is Amy
6 Hennen. I'm with the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.
7 My organization serves low to moderate income individuals
8 throughout the State via a variety categories including
9 family law, consumer housing, expungement, estate
10 administration and planning, and tax, and a number of
11 other things.

12 But this evening I wanted to talk a little bit
13 about the clinics that we have been doing with the Pro
14 Bono Resource Center and the Office of People's Counsel,
15 who is also on the call today. We are running these
16 clinics approximately every two weeks. There is some
17 variation. But we're providing brief legal advice to
18 folks that are facing utility bill issues, both in -- for
19 Baltimore City, both water and BGE related. And so we
20 are -- the clinics are open to everybody, tenants,
21 homeowners. It doesn't matter if the person is

1 undocumented. It doesn't matter what their income is.
2 If the person is going to need some sort of ongoing
3 representation, the person does have to potentially
4 qualify under our normal service guidelines.

5 Our normal service guidelines don't have a
6 requirement for documentation status, but the person
7 would have to be somebody who is under our income
8 guidelines, and doesn't -- is not over our asset
9 guidelines. So generally that means that they have one
10 house, and it means that their income is not over about
11 54 or 56 thousand dollars for a family of four.

12 So there are a number of options that are
13 available for folks that are facing -- that are facing
14 high water bills, especially in Baltimore City. And the
15 process can be a little bit tricky to navigate, and so
16 it's one of the reasons why we're doing these clinics.
17 There are some, hopefully, new programs that will be
18 coming online next year to help folks, including tenants,
19 but they're not -- they've been delayed. They were
20 supposed -- they were scheduled to take effect earlier
21 this year, but they've been delayed 'till next year.

1 And then anything, generally any issues related
2 to BGE, we refer that to our partner, the Office of
3 People's Counsel. So I will, obviously, leave it to them
4 to chat about what they do.

5 With regard to sort of difficulties that we're
6 certainly experiencing, we are trying a variety of
7 methods for outreach including putting fliers into food
8 bags, and things like that. But we're relying heavily on
9 our community partners to help spread the word. The
10 clinics are by phone in an attempt to make things as easy
11 as possible for people that are facing the digital
12 divide. And if there are documents that the client might
13 potentially need to send in, we can do that by mail or
14 the person can potentially drop them off. There are a
15 few options. We're trying to make it as easy as possible
16 for people, but it is -- there is the digital divide
17 struggle, and so we've really been seeing that.

18 Thank you.

19 MS. DORSEY: Amy, thank you.

20 As the Maryland Department of Social Services
21 joined us yet?

1 Okay. Then it appears to me the -- I have
2 United Way 211.

3 Okay.

4 MR. GOTTBREHT: Hello. Hi. It takes a moment
5 to unmute. I apologize for that. Hi. I'm Scott
6 Gottbreht. I'm the Associate Vice President of Homeless
7 Services at United Way of Central Maryland, and I oversee
8 our response to the COVID housing crisis.

9 United Way has some funds from the Emergency
10 Food and Shelter Program also known as EFSP, which are
11 funds that FEMA passes down to United Way Worldwide, who
12 then distributes to local boards, who make decisions
13 about where to invest those funds.

14 And we applied for those funds to leverage in
15 the direction of rental assistance and eviction
16 prevention. And these funds are typically quite good
17 because they're very flexible. They don't need a whole
18 lot of documentation. And explicitly in the regulations
19 they say that there's not a requirement related to
20 households with, for example, undocumented head of
21 household situations. In fact, the program is explicitly

1 designed to sort of work around those, and can be
2 flexible at times.

3 That being said, some examples of folks that we
4 are unable to assist are folks who -- because this is
5 particularly a CARES allotment of EFSP funds, and so they
6 have to be able to document loss due to COVID. And the
7 caption there, I think, is not that they have to have a
8 loss due to COVID. I think a lot of people had a loss
9 due to COVID. They have to be able to document it, which
10 is a barrier and a challenge in and of itself. And then
11 I'll talk about a remedy to that in just a moment.

12 But the other thing that I think is important
13 is that with the EFSP funds the payment of a month of
14 past due rent has to sort of guarantee 30 days of
15 continuance in the unit. So, in other words, the feds
16 don't want someone, us paying back rent, and then the
17 person getting evicted anyway. And that seems like a
18 pretty reasonable standard from my perspective. But the
19 more landlords I talk to find themselves -- I find I'm
20 getting a lot more pushback day after day of folks who
21 are getting frustrated with all of the strings that are

1 being attached to eviction prevention dollars. Things
2 like for every month we pay a back rent, you can't evict
3 for a month after that or you have to forgive a certain
4 percentage of the rent. And there's a lot of landlords
5 that have just made the strategic decision that they're
6 not going to play ball. When we say you have to delay,
7 you can't file evictions for 30 days, what that means
8 because the court is so backed up, is that they have to
9 get out of their place in line currently, and get back in
10 the line a month from now, and their case isn't going to
11 be heard for three or four months more months. So asking
12 them to delay 30 days is like asking them to delay five
13 months. That's what I'm hearing now.

14 The point is that there are -- whenever we
15 attach strings, and the EFSP money does come with some
16 strings, there are some landlords that aren't willing to
17 play ball. And so some folks that we're not able to help
18 with these funds are folks who have landlords that are
19 simply not willing to cooperate with the requirements of
20 the program.

21 We do have some super flexible dollars. We are

1 United Way. And one of the things that we're good at is
2 raising money from businesses, private donors,
3 foundations. And so that's super flexible money we can
4 use in cases where there's documentation barriers or
5 cases where the landlord simply doesn't want to comply
6 with red tape. We can always just sort of write a check
7 and pay it off. But those monies are very few and far
8 between, and should -- and really should only be used in
9 the rarest of cases where someone has slipped through all
10 the cracks.

11 I heard one United Way describe their
12 eligibility screening as a cascade or a waterfall
13 eligibility triage, which makes a lot of sense to me. So
14 for the most restrictive amount that you're eligible for
15 you should go for that one. So if there's a pot of money
16 for veterans, and you're a veteran, you should go for
17 that amount of money. If you have a -- so I, so -- and
18 then if you're family with children and there's pots of
19 money for families with children, you should go for that
20 one, and so on down the cascade. And the super flexible
21 money should really only be reserved for situations in

1 which no other pot of money is available. And I think
2 coming up with sort of a system cascade like that would
3 be incredibly helpful. Some sort of visual that folks
4 can engage with to say if them (indiscernible). If not
5 this, then here's a pot of money I can apply for. If not
6 this, then here's another one, and on down the line. And
7 other continuums I've heard of have charts like that,
8 that are helpful, that can coordinate agencies and that
9 our public facing.

10 The other thing I was going to say is that
11 we're told a lot that the funds that we're getting, I've
12 heard from several service providers the funds we're
13 getting from government, from CARES Act money or from
14 government pots of money is not allowed to go to staff
15 costs or indirect costs, and this is creating some
16 serious trouble for us. The barrier of folks needing to
17 document they've been impacted by COVID, that can be
18 surmounted if you have a savvy case manager who can look
19 at bank statements, and get letters, and things like
20 that, but that requires staff time. And when there's so
21 many of these government pots of money that don't allow

1 for staff costs and don't allow for indirect cost, our
2 leadership is hard pressed to even accept a program like
3 this or want to participate in programs like this for
4 client assistance because it costs us money to operate,
5 and it drains our staff, and we're all working late, and
6 there's no money that can be used for these staff costs.
7 So that's another thing that I would recommend is
8 coverage for those indirect costs.

9 And the last thing I want to recommend is that
10 to overcome a digital divide, our 211 system answers
11 200,000 calls a year right now at this point with respect
12 to COVID. That's a lot of calls that we receive. And in
13 order to be -- in order to survive in the current
14 eviction prevention world, you have to be able to self-
15 advocate. You have to be able to have the wherewithal to
16 call the program, keep up with the news, get the
17 application windows, take the time from work to fill out
18 the forms and print them. And it really requires a lot
19 of wherewithal on the client side to try to navigate the
20 system; a lot of energy, a lot of time. And so I just
21 want to call it the one off mentality. That folks are

1 sort of left to fend for themselves, and I -- in
2 Baltimore County, for example, and other jurisdictions
3 we're trying to explore a strategy where we can bundle
4 large numbers of these accounts, reduce the red tape and
5 these sort of packaged deals. Because the way it is
6 right now it's sort of, it's sort of a hit or miss sort
7 of crapshoot for a lot of households that are lost trying
8 to navigate all these complex eligibility requirements
9 and application windows without a case manager on their
10 own. And really good luck to them. It's a difficult
11 situation whether or not they get the money comes down
12 more often than not to luck and happenstance, and who
13 they happen to know or what position they were in. I
14 think we need a much more strategic approach that can
15 handle a large number of accounts at the same time. So
16 we're talking about some landlord engagement strategies
17 where we can take 50 past due accounts, and try to settle
18 them all at the same time. We think that might get us
19 some headway, but that's just sort of a paradigm shift.
20 I don't think that means that we should give up on
21 individual one off approaches. I think it means that we

1 need to come at this from a bunch of different angles,
2 and keep slugging away at this thing. And that's an
3 approach that I think that we should consider in
4 Baltimore City.

5 So that's it from me. I've been talking too
6 long.

7 MS. DORSEY: Scott, thank you. Thank you so
8 much for those insights.

9 I believe that the only agency that I have not
10 heard from is the Office of the People's Counsel. Is
11 that correct?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hi. Thank you guys for
13 having me today. I really appreciate it. So I don't
14 think everyone always knows what OPC is. I'm just going
15 to take a second to just explain that. We are an
16 independent state agency, and what we do is we work to
17 kind of give voice, and look out for the best interest of
18 consumers of electric, natural gas, telecommunications
19 and private water. So we actually function primarily as
20 a consumer law office, even though we don't represent
21 kind of individual cases. We're kind of in the

1 background trying to effect change on kind of a larger
2 level. So we have -- we do have a Consumer Assistance
3 Unit though, and that's what I'm in charge of. I'm in
4 charge of Consumer Assistance at OPC. That's where we do
5 work one-on-one with folks to solve, like, very complex
6 utility situations. We do educate a lot of consumers
7 about their rights, and also agencies, and then answer a
8 lot of questions about -- but it's a very complex utility
9 sort of situation.

10 Now, during this time, we have had some changes
11 to our office, but we've always kind of been a place
12 where people can go and call in over the phone, which has
13 been nice. So they don't need that extra level of kind
14 of like technology to kind of get in touch with them.

15 Now the complications we work through, like,
16 for (indiscernible) understanding billing situations, and
17 then we link them a lot to other resources kind of like
18 Mr. -- I think it was Mr. Nevins (ph.) has done, kind of
19 partnering at this moment I think is the most important
20 thing that we can all be thinking about, and how to pull
21 resources, and how to e-mail one another. And to speak

1 to that, I think AP (indiscernible) was saying that he
2 was (indiscernible) partner because really the one thing
3 that we've seen that we have been able to help because of
4 kind of regulations on our office is that public water
5 piece. And so those of us that, like, live in Baltimore
6 City, that's a huge barrier for a lot of folks. So
7 having referrals over to whether it be MBLS, CBRC, PGAC
8 has all been really helpful to kind of like to lean on
9 one another.

10 Now, we've also been trying to get the word out
11 even further than just that small circle. So I think
12 since, I don't know, in the past couple months, we've
13 probably trained about 1,000 people in agencies on how to
14 help their folks either apply for assistance at one of
15 the CAP sites or online or one of the other sites
16 throughout the State, as well as, like, look for consumer
17 protection kind of red flags.

18 Now, in addition to that, we also -- a lot of
19 the work that we do is legal, and it's behind the scenes
20 kind of in litigation with the utility companies. So as
21 an example right now -- our office was very pivotal in

1 kind of negotiating the -- what's known as PC53, and
2 those are the protections that we're seeing now for
3 utility folks. I want to just quickly mention something
4 about that too. But we're also going to be submitting
5 comments on the -- it's called the AMP Program. It's the
6 Utility Arrearage Forgiveness Program. They have then
7 throughout the nation, especially now trying to address
8 some of these unprecedented arrearages we're seeing
9 across the nation, and Maryland is absolutely no
10 exception. We have several hundred thousand people, who
11 are in arrears, and we're looking at those folks that
12 have always probably needed the extra assistance to carry
13 the energy burden, but also now this whole new class of
14 people that have never been in this situation before.

15 There is money out there with the CARES Act. I
16 think (indiscernible) Energy Program the main funder for
17 utility assistance. It's about \$150 million. So the
18 money is there, but as the CAP Center said, there are
19 some digital issues with places not being open, and
20 people not knowing where to turn. So I think we struggle
21 a lot with trying to get the word out also. It seems so

1 simple, but, again, we have like these two different sets
2 of folks, and some might not have access to kind of a lot
3 of the digital marketing going on right now. And
4 specifically around those extra protections that people
5 have in place, right now everybody in the State of
6 Maryland, if you're behind on your utility bills, you are
7 guaranteed a 12-month payment plan. That might not seem
8 like a lot, but that was not something previously that
9 people had access to. And if you're (indiscernible)
10 certified, and you applied to energy assistance, you can
11 get a 24-month payment plan, which could really mean a
12 lot for a family who has really fallen back.

13 So I think some of the things that we're
14 struggling with is really getting that information out.
15 Because there's all of us kind of providers that know
16 this stuff as a second language, but it really is exactly
17 that. Kind of normal person would not know these things.
18 And so I think we are always trying to think about how do
19 we push this out so that people who need it get it.
20 Because right now it can't be as easy as walking into
21 your local kind of community center to find out. So I

1 think that's sort of where we struggle. And, like I
2 said, I think it was Mr. Nevins who said that I think
3 partnership is part of that in pushing information out
4 through networks, and kind of training the frontline
5 staff on knowing what the consumer protections are and
6 the red flags to look for.

7 MS. DORSEY: Thank you so much.

8 President Bowers, if DSS is not here, then that
9 completes my portion of the questioning, and I would like
10 to turn it back to you.

11 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Thank you so much,
12 Ms. Dorsey. Really appreciate that.

13 And to all our guests, we've got about another
14 25 minutes, and I want to invite members of the
15 Commission who may have comments or questions for any of
16 our panelists, and well as those who are in the general
17 public, who are watching, if you'd like to submit a
18 question through the Q&A function in the, online you can
19 do that, and if we're able, we'll grab some of your
20 questions for our panelists or comments you may have.

21 But are there any members of the Commission who

1 have a question for one of our panelists or an
2 observation based on what you heard? Floor is open.

3 MS. GUTHRIE: Yes. This is Tisha Guthrie.
4 First, I'd just like to thank everyone for making
5 themselves available this evening, and presenting the
6 information in a very cohesive manner.

7 This question actually goes to HABC. I
8 actually have a couple of questions. First of all, I'd
9 like to know when your online process for recertification
10 for those who are voucher holders, when does that go
11 live?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So that -- do you want
13 me -- is it okay if I answer that question or you want to
14 give me the other questions?

15 MS. GUTHRIE: No. You can go right ahead.
16 Thank you.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So we went live
18 June of '19, and we did it (indiscernible) schedules.
19 But as of August 20 of this year, we are 100 percent
20 online with our recertification process.

21 MS. GUTHRIE: Okay. Now, I will disclose that

1 as a Commissioner I sit here as a voucher holder. So my
2 voice is that of one that advocates for those who are
3 voucher holders. And as such, I personally know that
4 there are some serious issues with that program. And,
5 also, just being in contact with those who are voucher
6 holders, and have tried to utilize the program, I mean,
7 the online service, there are some barriers; one of which
8 is if there is one bit of information that does not allow
9 you to move forward even (indiscernible) process, you
10 cannot use it. And, unfortunately, that was my case. I
11 won't get into persona details, but I wasn't even
12 informed of the online process until February of this
13 year. So I do understand that it was a staggered
14 process, but as of February I was notified, and then
15 March happened.

16 Moving forward so --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Let me just make a
18 little comment. So when I said staggered schedules, it
19 was based on your next recertification. So as
20 recertifications came due, then that's when our
21 participants were notified. There is a two-step process.

1 First, you have 30 days to complete it. And if for some
2 reason you're unable to complete it, then we send -- we
3 start sending appointment letters that after you receive
4 your first appointment, if you don't respond, then you'll
5 get one additional opportunity to complete -- to come --
6 one additional opportunity to come into the office. And
7 then when you come into the office, we have four kiosks
8 in our waiting area. So the kiosks are there for us to
9 help you navigate through the process. But it sounds
10 like yours came due in February, and were you able --

11 MS. GUTHRIE: No, it did not. Mine came due
12 much later.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

14 MS. GUTHRIE: But the point I'm trying to make
15 is that -- and I'm glad you continued because as I, like
16 I say, my process had a glitch. The amount that I was
17 paying or that I am paying did not coincide with what
18 your system had documented. So there was a problem
19 there. That problem prevented me from moving forward.
20 So I didn't -- I no longer had the option to complete my
21 process online. But, again, I don't want to get caught

1 up in my own personal minutia. That's really not the
2 point. The point is that, yeah, the point is that there
3 are glitches, and there needs to be a POC, a plan of
4 correction so that people don't have this especially
5 during these times where I actually had to -- I didn't
6 have an option but to present or to fill out the paper
7 form. And I filled that out in June, and my income was
8 definitely impacted. As of today, which is October 27th,
9 I have yet to hear anything from the Housing Authority.
10 I am not an outlier. This is a problem, and there needs
11 to be a plan of correction. So --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What I would recommend
13 to you is, I mean, I'm not quite sure what happened. It
14 sounds like there was a discrepancy with income, the
15 amount or so --

16 MS. GUTHRIE: I'm just -- let me just jump in.
17 Because, again, I really -- this is not a personal issue.
18 I'm bringing this to the attention because, again, there
19 are a lot of residents, who depend on these programs, and
20 as we've mentioned, the navigating of the online system,
21 and having to actually go through the paper process of

1 recertification, it is -- it's extensive, and it can be
2 very panic inducing. And when you do not -- when you
3 complete the process, and you don't have any closure or
4 you don't hear anything from the agency, it continues to
5 produce anxiety. So I'm bringing that to your attention
6 because, again, I am not a isolated incident. I'm
7 hearing this from other individuals, who engage HABC.

8 MS. ALSTON: Okay. Well, thank you for that
9 comment. We will definitely look into it.

10 MS. GUTHRIE: Okay. And one more question.
11 You mentioned the landlord portal.

12 MS. ALSTON: Yes.

13 MS. GUTHRIE: Now, is this portal, is this
14 available? Is this something that has extended to small
15 property owners or and/or multi-family complex owners and
16 managers?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So the landlord portal
18 is open to all of our landlords. And I'm going to say
19 that we have about 98 percent of our landlords are on the
20 portal, and they can look at their inventory, their
21 inspections, their -- the housing assistance payment that

1 we make on behalf of the owner and the tenant share. It
2 pretty much has all the information about their units on
3 the portal. It says when your last inspection is. It
4 tells them about their checks. The plan is to move that
5 to a housing portal for our participants also so they can
6 see that the information -- their information, which
7 would be from the unit that they're residing in.

8 MS. GUTHRIE: Okay. And my last question,
9 again, this is based on not only personal experience,
10 but, again, be in contact and constant communication with
11 others. Mentioned was -- I'm sorry. I'm trying to see
12 what I wrote. The emergency PPE packets that were sent
13 out, and to whom -- how is it determined what residents
14 received these packages? Because I will tell you, there
15 are many people with whom I have spoken, myself included,
16 who had to buy their own, and I have never received
17 anything in the mail.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So those PPE packages
19 went out to the public housing residents, not the voucher
20 holders.

21 MS. GUTHRIE: Okay. So it wasn't made clear.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. Nicholas made that
2 announcement, and he runs the public housing side of our
3 program, and Corliss runs the Section 8 side. So the
4 PPEs and the bags went out to the public housing
5 residents, not the voucher holders.

6 MS. GUTHRIE: Okay. And what was the rationale
7 behind that distinction?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's a big difference.
9 I mean, the voucher holders they're all over the place.
10 We have some in the county. We have them everywhere.
11 Our public housing residents are all here in Baltimore
12 City. They're contained in our developments. We can get
13 to them. So we know where they are. It's a little bit
14 more taxing to get out to the Section 8 residents.

15 MS. GUTHRIE: Okay. Thank you.

16 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Thank you, Ms. Guthrie, for
17 your questions there, and comments.

18 Other questions, comments that members of the
19 Commission have?

20 Someone asked in the Q&A box, and I'll ask if
21 folks could go on mute while we're speaking. We're

1 getting some background. Someone asked what is the
2 official name of the portal in the Q&A box, is there some
3 official name of the portal that was referred to, I
4 guess, if someone was looking for that?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's just a landlord
6 portal, and it's only to those housing choice voucher
7 landlords that are receiving subsidy on behalf of our
8 participants.

9 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Got it. Thank you.

10 Other members of the Commission, that was a
11 question from the Q&A box. Any other members of the
12 Commission with comments or questions.

13 Or, Ms. Danise Jones-Dorsey, Ms. Dorsey, are
14 there other questions based on -- and we really
15 appreciate you keeping a running tally of what some of
16 the feedback that was coming through. Do you have other
17 questions you want to ask?

18 MS. DORSEY: Thank you, President Bowers. I
19 just have one clarification that I would like to have
20 made. Talking about persons who rent who are behind in
21 their rent because of COVID-19 economic problems. I want

1 to be clear that HABC only serves a portion of that
2 population. And it sounds like the United Way has
3 dollars to serve a different portion. Is that correct,
4 Executive Director Abrams? I want to make sure I'm clear
5 on that.

6 MS. ABRAHAMS: Right. So the Housing Authority
7 services Section 8 and LIPH, low income housing, the
8 public housing side. The population that we don't
9 service that is very vulnerable right now are the ones
10 receiving tax credit -- that are residing in tax credit
11 units. They don't have subsidies like we do. We have
12 subsidies from HUD to take care of those clients that we
13 serve. That population is really sitting out there
14 because they're almost treated like market rate
15 residents. But there are still affordable housing units
16 with no tax, no type of subsidy to help them. So they
17 are really a very vulnerable population right now.

18 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Scott, let me ask Scott at
19 United Way, if you're still on with us, the thought --
20 and thank you again for some of the conversations going
21 into this meeting. Any thoughts around how we -- how we

1 may be able to take this information that's been gathered
2 here tonight, and work it with your agency, potentially
3 put it out. And if -- and the notion of even beyond
4 tonight's information, just on an ongoing basis kind of
5 playing the chess board out three months ahead, six
6 months ahead, nine months ahead, who knows how long we'll
7 be in this kind of world. In terms of the ability to
8 have a central place for clients, providers to go, to get
9 information that's being updated, any thoughts around
10 whatever your agency or others that you may know about
11 may have the ability to do kind of on an ongoing basis to
12 keep this kind of information updated?

13 MR. GOTTBREHT: Sure. So our two in one call
14 center has been sort of touted by Governor Hogan in press
15 conferences and everything, and that entity is really
16 good at having all of its organization -- all of its
17 information regularly updated. And so when there's new
18 information it can ping the whole network of operators,
19 and they can sort of move like a school of fish. So I
20 think coordinating with 211 is definitely one of the key
21 ways. And we're also -- further request of this body

1 we've offered to produce an in-kind donation of our
2 graphic designer, who -- and this stubborn cat here who
3 is with me that our -- we'll -- our -- we're contributing
4 several hours of our graphic designer to create a one-
5 pager or multi-page document that can be circulated to
6 the public, and we can work with you all to update that.
7 But that's a great question.

8 And I, also, I want to -- there was a question
9 that was just recently asked about United Way has certain
10 money, and the Housing Authority has certain money. Just
11 want to clarify. We have like \$50,000 for Baltimore
12 City, which is the equivalent of about 35 households,
13 which is a drop in the bucket compared to the big
14 government money that's a system level response. It's
15 just a lot smaller. But the -- so I like to think in
16 terms of philanthropy money is very, very flexible, and
17 can be used in very, very flexible, gap filling
18 situations. And but government money and government
19 solutions need to be the bulk of their response because
20 that can handle the scale of the households that we're
21 seeing. United Way can play a part when you need

1 somebody who is nimble and flexible, no offense HABC, who
2 can plug dollars here and there, who can write checks
3 very quickly, who can case manage around the red tape.
4 That's where we come in, and we're a very willing partner
5 in that space.

6 We don't have as much money as government, but
7 we're definitely willing to work, and put in the extra
8 hours to try to make it work for folks who are in need.

9 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Scott, thank you. We
10 appreciate that, and appreciate the in-kind donation.
11 Really grateful for that for sure.

12 Other questions or comments? We've got a
13 couple minutes left here, about five minutes, that
14 Commission Members have based on what we've heard
15 tonight.

16 MR. HILL: This is Matt Hill. I just want to
17 come back to the CAP Centers and what Ms. Whitaker was
18 discussing before. And I'm just -- so we have a lot of
19 clients I know who are in the queue for either some part
20 of the application process, and I didn't know if you had
21 any updates on when monies -- application decisions might

1 be made, when money might start to go out the door. And
2 then I know we've had some ongoing back and forth about
3 language access, and I know you identified that as one of
4 the challenges you all are facing. So if you could talk
5 a little bit more about how you are looking to bridge
6 that gap, I would appreciate it.

7 MS. WHITAKER: Sure. So to address your first
8 question, we are processing applications currently, and
9 looking for money to go out the door very soon. And so
10 what we -- we partner with DHCD, and they gathered
11 information from clients who had already been serviced
12 through CSR, and that (indiscernible) updated rent
13 vouchers from those clients who continue to be behind in
14 rent. And so we re-evaluated those applications, ensured
15 that they were still eligible for the service, and had
16 all of the necessary documents and paperwork and
17 eligibility requirements met. And so we will be sending
18 checks out for those very soon. And we started with that
19 clientele just to test our system to make sure that we
20 were prepared for the onslaught of other applications.
21 And so that process will be evaluated at the close of

1 this week, and then next week we will process hopefully
2 with processing all of the applications that we are
3 receiving, and getting the monies out of the door.

4 Then so to address your second question, I
5 shared previously that we are in the process of
6 developing partnerships with (indiscernible) service for
7 immigrant communities, and they will process and case
8 manage the applications for the clients that seek
9 eviction prevention, who we are unable to service because
10 of language access.

11 MS. EDWARDS: And I just want to, I just want
12 to -- this is Tisha Edwards, add to Angela's last
13 statement because Scott was correct. There are so many
14 times where there isn't funding to support these
15 organizations who are stepping in and supporting the
16 collaboration. But I do want the Affordable Housing
17 Trust Fund to know that in the case where we have very
18 specific partnerships, for instance, the United Way of
19 Central Maryland, they are going to be our lead partner
20 on the case management for those families that need to be
21 relocated. And as Angela said, we have a handful of

1 trusted partners who will be our -- who will be the front
2 line supporters for the immigrant population.

3 I want you to know that we are providing
4 funding to those organizations to underwrite their
5 engagement in the process. Because we know that
6 everybody is having to take on more so we are using some
7 of our -- DHCD is providing the funding to use some of
8 the CDBG money we have to fund those partners for
9 additional staff, some of the overhead cost. So we are
10 trying to meet that need that Scott spoke to in our kind
11 of partnership that we're building around the Eviction
12 Prevention Programs. I just do want the Commission to
13 know that we are very cognizant of the strain that
14 nonprofits are under to be able to meet the need, and we
15 are doing our best to share in City resources to do some
16 of that underwriting of the partnerships that we have in
17 place.

18 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Edwards, thank you for
19 that.

20 I actually wanted to throw out a -- there is a
21 question in the chat box here looks like about the CAP

1 Centers. How many tenants received an application from
2 the CAP Center, and what is the best number to reach the
3 Centers? Is a question that was in our chat box.

4 MS. EDWARDS: So I put the phone number in the
5 chat box (410) 545-0900. And, Angela, please correct me
6 if I'm wrong, but I think we've received about a thousand
7 inquiries so far for eviction prevention. So they are
8 not going through an application process at this point
9 because we are triaging everyone who didn't get support
10 through the initial temporary rent program. So we're
11 going back, and all of those folks who were rejected for
12 a lot of different reasons, making sure that we can cover
13 them.

14 With the original temporary support program you
15 could only get two months of rent. We're now going back
16 to those folks, and qualifying them for up to six months
17 of rent. And so we have a pipeline of new applicants
18 that are coming into the CAP Center, and they are getting
19 a light touch, but they are the second wave of clients
20 that we will work through as Angela said. Our first wave
21 are those folks who are in the temporary rent support

1 program, who were either declined or who need additional
2 assistance right now. So we have kind of a tiered
3 approach, if you will, to meeting the growing demand.

4 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Edwards, thank you so
5 much.

6 I'm going to actually as we wrap this portion,
7 Ms. Dorsey, I'm going to give you 60 seconds for kind of
8 a final word as our moderator for this portion, if there
9 is a final word you'd like to say as we get read to wrap
10 this portion of our meeting.

11 MS. DORSEY: Thank you, President Bowers.

12 First of all, again, I would like to thank all
13 of the agencies that was represented tonight. Again, the
14 Commission does appreciate the work that you do. We do
15 know that this is a daunting service, particularly during
16 COVID-19. We also -- the next thing that is going to
17 happen -- I took copious notes as you commented, and some
18 themes emerged that I will present to President Bowers
19 regarding your comments to make recommendations from this
20 -- to the Commission to recommend to the appropriate
21 parties to help make this work easier. I'm looking at a

1 continuum of service that is seamless.

2 But, again, thank you for what you have
3 offered. We are going to get through this together. I'm
4 definitely appreciate of the fact that you all were
5 crystal clear that everyone in universe of being at risk
6 for eviction is not necessarily people that you serve.
7 So the other thing that emerged for me was who are the
8 folks that fall outside of your service area as well?
9 And we'll share that with the Commission.

10 President Bowers, thank you for your faith and
11 trust in me to moderate tonight, and to make notes. This
12 has been a pleasure, and I look forward to working with
13 you and the other Commissioners as we move forward to
14 address this concern with our partners.

15 Thank you all so much, and have a good evening.

16 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Ms. Dorsey, thank you so
17 much on behalf of the Commission. Very much want to
18 thank you for the work you put in ahead of time. Thank
19 you for the notes even that you were tracking as we were
20 going through this conversation, and the chat box, the
21 answers that people were giving, that was very helpful.

1 Yes. Want to thank all of our guests. We know
2 it's the end of a long day, and for you all to come in.
3 And I really want to thank again, it's a lot of thanks,
4 but we need to show gratitude and appreciation. The fact
5 that we have a range of folks here ranging from the CEO
6 of our Housing Authority to leaders of non-government
7 organizations, legal aid organizations, government staff,
8 we really appreciate the fact that we can have a mix of
9 people, which really does show -- it takes a lot of folks
10 to try to provide the kind of assistance that residents
11 of Baltimore City need in these unprecedented tough
12 times.

13 So thank you all for being here this evening.
14 And, again, I want to thank Commission Member Matt Hill
15 in particular for work that he put in behind the scenes
16 to do a lot of the organizing and reaching out to folks
17 and identifying Ms. Dorsey, did a great job.

18 We are in our public comment stage as we
19 prepare to move towards the end of the meeting. The
20 public comment stage, I want to ask Stephani with the
21 Department if there's any new -- if there are any new

1 questions that have come in, in the public comment
2 section, in the Q&A or the chat box as I've been trying
3 to monitor? But, Stephani, is there anything there that
4 we --

5 MS. ESTRADA: Yes. I have one from Tiffany
6 Brow (ph.). Is there a plan in place to reach that
7 vulnerable population? I believe that that was a
8 question for Janet when she was talking about HABC
9 couldn't serve the tax credit people.

10 MS. ABRAHAMS: Yeah. Well, I am not sure what
11 type of plan. I know that they kind of fit into the
12 market rate residents. So I know there are different
13 programs that I heard will be starting here within the
14 City to help those residents that have rent issues
15 because of COVID-19.

16 We don't have any programs within the Housing
17 Authority to assist because we are federally funded just
18 for the Section 8 and the Public Housing Program.

19 And I do want to make a comment to say that the
20 Housing Authority, we are not the only ones here in the
21 City providing Section 8 vouchers. So a lot of people

1 get confused thinking that just because they have a
2 voucher or they live in a building that has project base
3 that it is the housing authority. So I just need people
4 to make sure they check in with their management offices
5 to see exactly which Section 8 program they're on so that
6 they can really work with those offices to make sure
7 their rents are adjusted.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And, Stephani, can I
9 just follow-up on Janet's feedback related to these
10 individuals who are in these tax credit housing? That is
11 something we can help with in the CAP Centers through our
12 Eviction Prevention Program. So I'm open to figuring out
13 how to reach that population, but they should be directed
14 to us to the kind of city-wide Eviction Prevention
15 Program that we are managing. We should be able to help
16 them.

17 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Great. Stephani, anything
18 else coming in through the box?

19 MS. ESTRADA: Yes. Rachael B, what is the
20 official name of the portal? Now, I also believe that
21 that was a question for HABC because that came in when

1 Tisha was asking about --

2 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Yeah. I think Ms. Alston
3 answered that one earlier.

4 MS. ESTRADA: Okay.

5 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Yes.

6 MS. ESTRADA: It is one -- Shannon Snow,
7 Maryland Housing Department has an assisting program
8 that's been out since the summer for tax credit property.
9 So --

10 MS. SNOW: Okay. That's good information.

11 PRESIDENT BOWERS: Thank you.

12 All right. So hearing nothing else on the
13 public comment side, we appreciate folks bringing in
14 questions.

15 To the Commission Members under the other
16 business portion of the agenda, just want to look at one
17 thing. We're going to make some -- two things. One, I
18 should say first to put a bow on what just happened. By
19 way of reminder, we'll be working to kind of debrief and
20 be in conversation with Scott and the folks at United Way
21 again about how to pull some of this information

1 together, format it so it is in one central place, in
2 addition to the written answers being part of the formal
3 record that will be eventually posted publicly, we're
4 going to work with United Way to produce something that
5 will be more kind of readily accessible to folks sooner,
6 and in a format that people can distribute to their
7 network to hopefully get information out and about there.

8 The other thing I would just say, I think, is
9 we always kind of lift up that for those who may be
10 listening certainly on the public side and on the private
11 sector side the extent of which we can identify new
12 dollars and creative ways to stretch existing dollars to
13 help meet the urgent need that exists as we've heard from
14 both the public and private side, there are real
15 compelling needs out here, and we need more dollars
16 brought to the table to try to help folks out in all
17 sorts of ways. So we encourage if folks have any
18 influence on that in whatever tables you sit at on the
19 public or private sector side, to please try to identify
20 that. And we from the Commission standpoint will
21 continue to work with the Department, obviously, around

1 how the dollars that have been allocated to the Trust
2 Fund are utilized in ways that can help meet these urgent
3 needs that are out here.

4 Commission Members I want to say that at our
5 last meeting we had talked about having a December 15th
6 meeting. Our calendar gets a little -- in November and
7 December -- mixed around because of the holidays end of
8 the months. What I'm going to suggest is that we not --
9 we will not have a November meeting, which is -- comes
10 the week of Thanksgiving. Then we're moving up our
11 December meeting so that our next meeting of this body
12 would actually be on December the 15th, same time. So
13 that we would not have a November meeting, and then our
14 -- but our December meeting would come earlier than
15 normal on the 15th. And so we'll make sure that we can
16 send out something to hold calendars for folks who are
17 members of the Commission and, obviously, let the public
18 know as well.

19 Does anybody else have anything, Commission
20 Members, by way of other business before we adjourn?

21 Okay. Thank you again to Department staff.

1 Thank you for all guests. Thank you for those who have
2 watched online.

3 It's 7:31 p.m., October 27, 2020. This meeting
4 is officially adjourned. Have a blessed evening.

5 (Whereupon, at 7:31 p.m., on October 27, 2020,
6 the meeting was adjourned.)

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