

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7412

To facilitate the use of rural housing vouchers.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

Ms. CROCKETT (for herself, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, and Ms. SALINAS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To facilitate the use of rural housing vouchers.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rural Housing Vouch-
5 er Enhancement Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Across the Nation, Americans are facing a
9 shortage of affordable housing.

1 (2) The right to a peaceful, affordable, dignified
2 place to live is a right to which every American is
3 entitled.

4 (3) In rural communities, a lack of housing
5 supply makes the loss of formerly affordable housing
6 devastating to the community.

7 (4) That is why the United States Department
8 of Agriculture provides essential rural housing
9 vouchers for those who lose their affordability guar-
10 antees.

11 (5) The people served by this program are pre-
12 dominately seniors and Americans with disabilities.

13 (6) The Department of Agriculture has been
14 charged with a monumentally important task that it
15 has generally excelled in performing, especially con-
16 sidering it operates with far less funding than it
17 needs.

18 (7) Nevertheless, there are Americans who fall
19 through the cracks and face housing instability as a
20 result.

21 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are as fol-
22 lows:

23 (1) To provide the Department of Agriculture
24 with the tools necessary to ensure everyone entitled
25 to a rural housing voucher remains housed.

1 (2) To clearly establish a standard that it is un-
2 acceptable for any person who is eligible for and
3 chooses to use a rural housing voucher to not be
4 able to fully use their voucher.

5 (3) To make clear, de facto and de jure, that
6 giving full force to rural housing vouchers is a
7 whole-of-Government effort to guarantee that hous-
8 ing is a human right.

9 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

10 For purposes of this Act the following definitions
11 shall apply:

12 (1) **RURAL HOUSING VOUCHER.**—The term
13 “rural housing voucher” means a voucher for rental
14 assistance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture
15 pursuant to title V of the Housing Act of 1949 (42
16 U.S.C. 1471 et seq.) to a tenant of a multifamily
17 property previously financed with a loan made or in-
18 sured under section 515 of such title (42 U.S.C.
19 1485) or section 514 of such title (42 U.S.C. 1484),
20 or a grant under section 516 of such title (42 U.S.C.
21 1486).

22 (2) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary”, except
23 where otherwise specified, means the Secretary of
24 Agriculture.

1 **SEC. 4. MODALITY OF NOTICE.**

2 (a) MODALITY REQUIREMENTS.—

3 (1) STANDARD.—The Secretary of Agriculture
4 shall provide all notices relating to rural housing
5 vouchers that are mailed to tenants to be provided
6 in the format that best facilitates the tenant's un-
7 derstanding of the notice and advises the tenant of
8 any applicable appellate rights.

9 (2) ALTERNATIVE FORMATS.—

10 (A) REQUIREMENT.—If a tenant has elect-
11 ed to receive information from another agency
12 of the Federal Government agency in an alter-
13 native format to the standard format, including
14 in a language other than English or in braille,
15 large type, or audio format, the Secretary shall
16 send all notices referred to in paragraph (1) in
17 such alternative format, together with the no-
18 tice in the standard format.

19 (B) INDICATION OF PREFERENCE.—The
20 Secretary of Agriculture shall make available a
21 mechanism for tenants to indicate their pref-
22 erence for receipt of notices referred to in para-
23 graph (1) in alternative formats and shall pro-
24 vide such notices to tenants in accordance with
25 their indicated preference.

1 (C) ACTION ON TENANT’S BEHALF.—The
2 Secretary shall provide for another individual,
3 upon a signed certification that the tenant has
4 authorized such action, to act on a tenant’s be-
5 half in indicating a preference with respect to
6 an alternative format of notices.

7 (b) COORDINATION ACROSS FEDERAL AGENCIES.—
8 The Secretary of Agriculture shall consult and coordinate
9 with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner
10 of the Social Security Administration to implement the
11 procedures and systems necessary to comply with sub-
12 section (a)(2)(A). The Secretary of the Treasury and the
13 Commissioner of the Social Security Administration shall
14 provide all information necessary to ensure such compli-
15 ance.

16 (c) PLAIN LANGUAGE.—Within one year after the
17 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall re-
18 vise the language on the standard notices provided pursu-
19 ant to paragraph (1) to be in compliance with the Plain
20 Writing Act of 2010 (5 U.S.C. 301 note).

21 (d) TIMELINE OF NOTICE.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—For each property financed
23 under section 515, or 514 and 516, of title V of the
24 Housing Act of 1949 having tenants who may be eli-
25 gible for a rural housing voucher, the Secretary shall

1 provide notice as required by paragraph (2) within
2 a reasonable time. In the event of eligibility due to
3 prepayment or mortgage maturity, the Secretary
4 shall provide initial notice as required by paragraph
5 (2) and subsequently on an annual basis to each
6 household following the initial notice.

7 (2) INITIAL NOTICE.—

8 (A) PREPAYMENT.—Within 30 days of the
9 approval by the Secretary of a borrowers' re-
10 quest to prepay its loan under such section 515
11 or 514 and at least 120 days before the prepay-
12 ment date, the Secretary shall provide written
13 notice to each household residing in the prop-
14 erty that informs them of the prepayment ap-
15 proval, the possible actions that may happen
16 with respect to the property upon that prepay-
17 ment, and how to secure a rural housing vouch-
18 er.

19 (B) MORTGAGE MATURITY.—Not later
20 than the date that is 3 years before the date
21 that the loan under such section 515 or 514 for
22 the property will mature, the Secretary shall
23 provide written notice to each household resid-
24 ing in the property that informs them of the
25 date of the loan maturity, the possible actions

1 that may happen with respect to the property
2 upon that maturity, and how to secure a rural
3 housing voucher.

4 **SEC. 5. LANDLORD OUTREACH.**

5 (a) IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK PROPERTIES.—On
6 an annual basis, the Secretary shall identify the addresses
7 of the multifamily housing properties with loans financed
8 under section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 having
9 mortgages that are subject to loan acceleration or matu-
10 rity or rental assistance contracts that the Secretary de-
11 termines are at risk of being terminated within the ensu-
12 ing 4 years without an extension of the rental assistance
13 contract.

14 (b) EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TO LANDLORDS.—
15 The Secretary shall engage in education and outreach to
16 landlords, using multiple modalities and in-person out-
17 reach, to promote landlord interest in accepting rural
18 housing vouchers that may be issued to tenants of such
19 identified at-risk properties.

20 (c) AREA.—Such education and outreach shall be
21 performed first with landlords owning properties with
22 dwelling units for rent that are nearest to such identified
23 at-risk properties and if, after extensive outreach, the Sec-
24 retary determines there to be insufficient interest among
25 such landlords the Secretary shall expand the radius for

1 the area of such education and outreach progressively up
2 to an area within a 20-mile radius of such identified at-
3 risk properties.

4 (d) SHARING OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary of
5 Housing and Urban Development shall provide the Sec-
6 retary of Agriculture with technical assistance and train-
7 ing on conducting landlord outreach and education, such
8 as partnering with at the public housing agency whose ju-
9 risdiction is nearest to an identified at-risk property.

10 **SEC. 6. STRATEGIC PLAN.**

11 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall, not later
12 than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act,
13 establish and submit to the Congress a strategic plan that
14 identifies—

15 (1) for each of the ensuing 5 years, the multi-
16 family housing properties with loans financed under
17 section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 having rent-
18 al assistance contracts that Secretary determines are
19 at risk of exiting the portfolio, whether because of
20 the loan being paid off or for some other reason;

21 (2) for properties at risk of exiting the portfolio
22 in the next year, tenants whose leases would expire
23 or come up for renewal within one, two, and three
24 months of the anticipated exit date of the property;

1 (3) a process for regularly updating the infor-
2 mation described in (2), as precisely as possible, as
3 the anticipated exit date of the property approaches;

4 (4) a method for identifying at-risk tenants who
5 may not receive a rural housing voucher;

6 (5) an outreach strategy to inform such at-risk
7 tenants of their status and options for remaining
8 housed;

9 (6) metrics and procedures to track the status
10 and outcomes of such at-risk tenants; and

11 (7) a comprehensive procedure to ensure at-risk
12 tenants have their vouchers and have a suitable
13 dwelling to rent using the voucher by the time their
14 lease expires or comes up for renewal.

15 (b) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall fully
16 and expeditiously implement the strategic plan established
17 pursuant to subsection (a) within two years after the date
18 of the enactment of this Act.

19 (c) REPORTS.—During the 30-month period begin-
20 ning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
21 retary shall provide a report to the Congress not less fre-
22 quently than every three months on the status of the de-
23 velopment of the strategic plan and the implementation
24 of the plan.

1 (d) COORDINATION ACROSS FEDERAL GOVERN-
2 MENT.—To the extent other Federal agencies are identi-
3 fied under the strategic plan established pursuant to sub-
4 section (a) as being necessary for the implementation of
5 the plan, it shall be the duty of each such agency so identi-
6 fied to assist to the greatest extent practical in fulfilling
7 relevant requests by the Secretary of Agriculture.

8 **SEC. 7. PROTECTION OF AT-RISK TENANTS.**

9 (a) WAIVER AND MODIFICATION.—The Secretary
10 may waive any waiting period or deadline involved in the
11 disbursement or execution of a rural housing voucher for
12 at-risk tenants as the Secretary deems necessary to ensure
13 such tenants remain housed.

14 (b) IDENTIFYING HOUSING STOCK.—The Secretary
15 shall work with interested landlords identified in section
16 5 of this Act to pre-clear dwellings near at-risk tenants
17 as available for rental using a rural housing voucher.

18 **SEC. 8. REPORTS TO CONGRESS.**

19 (a) INITIAL REPORT.—The Secretary shall, not later
20 than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act,
21 submit to the Congress and make publicly available on the
22 website of the Department of Agriculture, a report detail-
23 ing—

24 (1) for tenants in rural multifamily housing
25 properties with loans financed under section 515 of

1 the Housing Act of 1949 having rental assistance
2 contracts that terminated, the housing outcomes for
3 such tenants one month, three months, six months,
4 and one year after the tenant's lease expires or is re-
5 newed; and

6 (2) for each of the ensuing 4 years how many
7 rural multifamily housing properties are expected to
8 end participation the programs under title V of the
9 Housing Act of 1949, the number of potentially im-
10 pacted residents, and how many properties are at-
11 risk as described in section 5(a).

12 (b) ANNUAL REPORT.—On an annual basis, the Sec-
13 retary shall submit to the Congress and make publicly
14 available on the website of the Department of Agriculture
15 information identifying—

16 (1) the number of rural housing vouchers issued
17 during the preceding year;

18 (2) the reason for the issuance such vouchers,
19 including whether the mortgage on a property was
20 prepaid, the mortgage for the property was fore-
21 closed, or any other reason;

22 (3) whether the property was subject to any
23 form of use restriction; and

1 (4) the number of vouchers that were not re-
2 newed that were previously utilized by tenants and
3 the reason for non-renewal of the voucher.

4 **SEC. 9. REGULATIONS.**

5 The Secretary shall issue any regulations that may
6 be necessary to carry out this Act and shall issue a notice
7 of proposed rulemaking for such regulations not later than
8 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

9 **SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

10 There is authorized to be appropriated such sums as
11 may be necessary for the Secretary of Agriculture to—

12 (1) hire additional staff to implement and en-
13 force this Act; and

14 (2) obtain such additional supplies and informa-
15 tion technology to carry out this Act.

○