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The Cost of a Lost Voucher

Alfreda Tydings

To ARHA staff, a voucher might look like just a piece of paper. A form that can wait. A file that can be misplaced. A recertification that doesn't get finished on time.

But to tenants, a voucher is everything. It is the key to safe housing. It is the chance to move a family out of mold, asbestos, and collapsing ceilings. It is the lifeline that allows parents to protect their children's health and future.

Right now, vouchers and recertifications are being lost, delayed, or ignored. Some tenants are waiting nearly a year, or are being told they are not on the list at all. Caseworkers are let go, and tenants are not notified. Calls and emails go unanswered. And when tenants finally try to go to the building to speak with someone face-to-face, the doors are locked.

To staff, these may seem like administrative delays. But to us, the families who live with the consequences, this negligence is devastating. Without a voucher, families are stuck in unsafe housing. Without recertification, they fall behind through no fault of their own. What looks like a "clerical error" to ARHA causes panic, fear, and harm to entire households.

The cost of a lost voucher is not measured in paperwork. It is measured in children with respiratory problems from mold. In parents who feel trapped in unsafe homes. In families who lose the chance to move forward.

A voucher is not just a form. It is a family's future. And losing it — or delaying it — is not a small mistake. It is negligence with life-changing consequences.

Today, we urge the City Council to request that ARHA's Board of Commissioners take these issues seriously and begin addressing this negligence by staff.