



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 3, 2021

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

City Participation in a State Rental Assistance Program for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

ISSUE: Acceptance of allocation of State funds to support a small-scale rental assistance program to benefit individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who secure housing in the City of Alexandria.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- 1) Approve acceptance of an allocation of funds from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to be administered locally by the Office of Housing as rental assistance to benefit individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who secure housing in the City of Alexandria; and
- 2) Authorize the City Manager to execute a Memorandum with DBHDS to memorialize the working agreement between that State agency and the Office of Housing.

BACKGROUND: In Fall 2020, DBHDS asked the Office of Housing (Housing) for help in administering a State rental assistance program for qualified individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/ED) who secure housing in the City of Alexandria's rental market. Pursuant to a settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice, known as the Olmstead Agreement, the Commonwealth is striving to help persons with ID/DD to live in residential settings that promote independence to the greatest extent feasible, and has created a State rental assistance program (SRAP) to reduce one of the key barriers that challenge this population's access to housing.

DISCUSSION: Individuals qualified to participate in the SRAP will be referred to Housing by the DBHDS. Qualification will be determined at the State level based on the individual's readiness to live independently.

The amount of rental assistance provided will be calculated to cover local fair market rents, based on the individual's ability to contribute, taking into account their monthly income, including Social Security and/or Social Security Disability Income, as well as any income derived through employment or another source.

Within Housing, the program - which is anticipated to serve up to 17 individuals over time - will be administered by the Housing Program Manager in the Landlord Tenant Division and Housing's Management Analyst will process monthly rental assistance payments on behalf of SRAP beneficiaries. The Housing Program Manager will provide information and referrals regarding local apartment complexes, including nonprofit-sponsored affordable housing projects, to help SRAP beneficiaries, however SRAP beneficiaries will conduct their own searches and choose their housing. Prior to a lease being executed, the Housing Program Manager, will review the lease, including monthly rent, fees and utility costs to determine that the unit is affordable to the SRAP beneficiary. The Housing Program Manager will also provide reports to the State on a regular basis regarding the number of individuals being served. Housing will receive a monthly fee (anticipated to be approximately \$120/month/unit) for each State rental assistance case and payment administered. While it is proposed at this time that this SRAP program be placed in the Office of Housing, consideration will be given to place this program under the administration of DCHS.

The SRAP program is expected to grow slowly over time, as more individuals with ID/DD are prepared to be ready for successful independent living. Over an initial five-year program period, DBHDS projects that up to 17 individuals will be served. Funding allocations from the State will be made in advance, on an annual basis, and replenished as necessary. The City will not incur any financial obligation related to the rental program or those served, however Housing will coordinate with the City's Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) regarding any new community supports that may be required as a result of the program. Based on DBHDS's experience launching SRAP in other jurisdictions, it is assumed that many beneficiaries who choose to rent in Alexandria are already City residents, and/or have family living here, who can provide social and practical support, as needed.

As part of its commitment to Housing for All (a key principle of the Housing Master Plan as well as the new All Alexandria Race and Social Equity Resolution), Housing proposes to support the DBHDS program, and believes the administrative duties it entails can be fulfilled within current staff capacity. Also, since most nonprofit-sponsored affordable housing developments funded with low-income housing tax credits now prioritize the provision of housing for persons with ID/DD (a requirement that can be waived if eligible individuals are not available when units are available for lease), Housing would like to more proactively help connect potential ID/DD renters with potential housing resources. As an example, 12 units (10%) of the units at The Spire (now under construction) are allocated for ID/DD renters, as needed.

FISCAL IMPACT: No financial obligation is incurred by the City through its proposed participation in this program. Housing will earn a monthly fee to recognize the staff support being provided based on the number of cases administered.

ATTACHMENTS: None.

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager
Helen McIlvaine, Director, Office of Housing
Eric Keeler, Deputy Director, Office of Housing
Melodie Seau, Chief, Landlord Tenant Division
Virginia Patton, Housing Program Manager, Landlord Tenant Division