

PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS DESERVE A SAY IN THEIR FUTURE SUPPORT SB708 (MCLELLAN) AND HB921 (JONES)

The Problem: Across Virginia, public housing is crumbling due to disinvestment. In response, the federal Housing and Urban Development agency has authorized public housing authorities to demolish, sell or otherwise dispose of this housing. Federal requirements for notifying residents of such actions are confusing at best: one requires public housing authorities to hold a series of meetings before they take action but does not specify a timeline for the meetings¹, and the other provides for notice to tenants only 90 days before they are displaced.²

The Solution: SB 708 requires public housing authorities planning on demolishing, selling or otherwise disposing of public housing to provide each resident at least twelve months' notice of their intended action. The bill also requires housing authorities to notify any agency responsible for administering vouchers to displaced residents and prohibits housing authorities from changing lease terms or evicting tenants for violations unrelated to health and safety during the twelve-month notice period.

Additional Benefits: SB 708 also:

- Requires housing authorities to notify the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and the local clerk of their intended action;
- Specifies that the notice to residents must contain the phone number for the local legal aid society and instructions for requesting more information about the intended action and submitting written comments to the housing authority; and
- Supplements confusing and vague federal law with clear directives housing authorities can easily follow.

Public Housing residents deserve meaningful notice of any plan to significantly change or demolish their community as well as real opportunities to participate in the planning process. By requiring housing authorities to provide early, clear notice to residents, SB 708 will help ensure that residents are not surprised with a notice to move in three months and will have a chance to discuss and influence decisions made about the future of their community.

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¹ Notice required under the Rental Assistance Demonstration project, established through a series of federal notices. For more information, see nlihc.org/sites/default/files/AG-2019/04-08_Rental-Assistance-Demonstration.pdf

² 42 USCA 1437p(a)(4)(A)