

5000 FAMILIES

Rent Relief to Empower Virginia Families

Items [102#3s](#) (Sen. Hashmi)
[102#1h](#) (Del. Coyner)

SUMMARY:

Many Virginia families face high housing costs throughout the Commonwealth. The resulting housing instability can lead to continued movement, displacement, and eviction. The lack of a permanent, reliable, and stable home has a profound impact on students' health, development, and education. The 5000 Families pilot program invests \$100M in the future of Virginia students and families by providing housing opportunity and stability. Through this program, rent relief will be granted to 5,000 low-income families on a monthly basis to keep their rent affordable for the long term. This initiative will empower families and their children by ensuring they have a stable home and thus a strong foundation for success at school and beyond.

THE HOUSING PROBLEM:

The cost of housing across the Commonwealth continues to rise which is putting a strain on family budgets, particularly for low-income Virginians. In fact, one in three Virginian households are cost burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs. For rental households with extremely low incomes (ELI), the burden is even more severe. The most recent data estimates that 83 percent of ELI households are cost-burdened (183,096 households).

Adding to this financial stress is the fact that the federal Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is significantly underfunded. The nation's largest source of rental assistance, the federal HCV program, is funded through an annual appropriation by Congress. But the limited amount of funding appropriated leaves many Virginia families on long waiting lists. Only one-in-five eligible Virginians receive rental assistance from the HCV program. This means that approximately 347,000 Virginians who qualify are unable to access critical support due to a lack of federal funding. This issue was noted as a key challenge by the HB854 study.

Simply put, a great many Virginia families are struggling under the burden of high housing costs and don't have access to the critical support they need.

THE EDUCATION IMPACT:

Housing is the foundation for success from a very young age. Children are more likely to excel at school and be positioned for lifelong success when they have a stable and permanent home. Learning loss, exacerbated by the pandemic, has been a reality for many Virginia children for years. Housing instability is a large contributor to this loss. Numerous studies indicate that children who change schools or are frequently absent experience declines in educational achievement. Changing schools and absenteeism are two of the most common consequences of housing instability.

On the other hand, stable housing can lead to improved cognitive, developmental, and mental health outcomes for students, which in turn can lead to improved academic achievement. A rigorous long-term study found that children whose families were able to achieve housing stability through rental assistance had substantially higher adult earnings and rates of college attendance than children who were not able to access such assistance.

THE SOLUTION:

Virginia can make a bold investment in the future of the Commonwealth by developing a statewide rent relief program. The 5000 Families pilot program would target families with school-aged children who meet specific qualification standards. Ongoing rent relief will enable those families to stay in their current home or find a more stable, permanent home of their choice. Facilitating enhanced housing stability will benefit Virginia families and the Commonwealth in countless ways.

As Virginia seeks to grow its economy through the expansion of its workforce, it is critical that we equip parents with the resources they need to ensure the best possible education for their children, including a place to call home. Providing housing stability through rent relief will directly lead to the educational outcomes necessary for Virginia to compete in the 21st century.

This pilot program will provide \$100M in monthly rent relief over a two-year period to 5,000 low-income families with school-aged children across Virginia. Managed by the Department of Housing and Community Development, the 5000 Families pilot program will empower families and set up students for success. Ultimately, this program is an investment in these children and a brighter future for us all.

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