



Offered by City Councilors Kenzie Bok and Annissa Essaibi-George

**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

**RESOLUTION CALLING ON PROPERTY OWNERS
WITH VACANCIES TO IMMEDIATELY RENT TO
FAMILIES WITH HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS**

WHEREAS: The current public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the urgency of housing everyone, including our most vulnerable families; *and*

WHEREAS: April is Fair Housing Month, and longstanding discrimination against families, people of color, and voucher-holders in general has for decades frustrated the goals of fair housing and impeded the ability of many local families to lease apartments in Boston; *and*

WHEREAS: Recent evidence shows that Boston is housing a dwindling number of children, due in large part to the lack of access to affordable units for families to live in; *and*

WHEREAS: The federal Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program allows low-income residents to pay 30% of their income towards rent, while the Boston Housing Authority pays the remainder due to the landlord or property owner, thereby enabling participants to be stably housed in Boston despite rising rents, *and*

WHEREAS: In 2019 the Boston Housing Authority adjusted its payment standard to Small-Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRS), thereby allowing maximum voucher rents to match market rents in most Boston neighborhoods; *and*

WHEREAS: These Small-Area Fair Market Rents currently apply to both Tenant-Based Vouchers, held by designated low-income families, and Project-Based Vouchers, in which the subsidy is attached to a fixed unit; *and*

WHEREAS: Five hundred homeless families, most of them residing in state shelters, are currently holding BHA federal housing vouchers and are actively searching for permanent housing to enable their families to safely follow physical distancing guidelines and stay at home during this crisis; *and*

WHEREAS: As announced last week, an additional 1,000 housing vouchers will be given to Boston Public School families facing housing instability over the coming months, in a partnership between Boston Housing Authority and Boston Public Schools; *and*

WHEREAS: The current crisis has highlighted the importance of home to student learning, and conversely how many local families rely on Boston Public Schools as a source of stability, food, community, and basic services while experiencing housing instability; *and*

WHEREAS: Many property owners across the city have units that are currently vacant due to normal churn in the property market, or to the sudden recent departure of students and other tenants from Boston as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and may be losing money on these vacant units; *and*

WHEREAS: The Boston Housing Authority has expressed its resolve to work with any landlord or property owner, large or small, to rapidly facilitate and expedite the housing of voucher-holder families in this crisis, and has dedicated a phone line (617-988-4540) and staff capacity to that purpose; *and*

WHEREAS: It is imperative that we house as many of Boston's homeless families as possible as quickly as possible, and a key factor in our ability to do so is a willingness amongst responsible landlords and property owners to accept families with housing vouchers; *and*

WHEREAS: Housing a family in this crisis is an act of great human solidarity and a concrete way that Bostonians of all means can help one another to safely weather this public health emergency;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Boston City Council urges any local landlord or property owner with any units that are currently vacant in the City of Boston to reach out to the Boston Housing Authority and express a willingness to house families using Tenant-Based or Project-Based Housing Choice Vouchers.

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