H. R. 118TH CONGRESS 2D Session

To facilitate the use of rural housing vouchers.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. CROCKETT introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ___

A BILL

To facilitate the use of rural housing vouchers.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rural Housing Voucher
5 Enhancement Act of 2024”.

6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

7 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Across the Nation, Americans are facing a
9 shortage of affordable housing.
(2) The right to a peaceful, affordable, dignified place to live is a right to which every American is entitled.

(3) In rural communities, a lack of housing supply makes the loss of formerly affordable housing devastating to the community.

(4) That is why the United States Department of Agriculture provides essential rural housing vouchers for those who lose their affordability guarantees.

(5) The people served by this program are predominately seniors and Americans with disabilities.

(6) The Department of Agriculture has been charged with a monumentally important task that it has generally excelled in performing, especially considering it operates with far less funding than it needs.

(7) Nevertheless, there are Americans who fall through the cracks and face housing instability as a result.

(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are as follows:

(1) To provide the Department of Agriculture with the tools necessary to ensure everyone entitled to a rural housing voucher remains housed.
(2) To clearly establish a standard that it is un-
acceptable for any person who is eligible for and
chooses to use a rural housing voucher to not be
able to fully use their voucher.

(3) To make clear, de facto and de jure, that
giving full force to rural housing vouchers is a
whole-of-Government effort to guarantee that hous-
ing is a human right.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act the following definitions
shall apply:

(1) Rural housing voucher.—The term
“rural housing voucher” means a voucher for rental
assistance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture
pursuant to title V of the Housing Act of 1949 (42
U.S.C. 1471 et seq.) to a tenant of a multifamily
property previously financed with a loan made or in-

sured under section 515 of such title (42 U.S.C.
1485) or section 514 of such title (42 U.S.C. 1484),
or a grant under section 516 of such title (42 U.S.C.
1486).

(2) Secretary.—The term “Secretary”, except
where otherwise specified, means the Secretary of
Agriculture.
SEC. 4. MODALITY OF NOTICE.

(a) MODALITY REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) STANDARD.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall provide all notices relating to rural housing vouchers that are mailed to tenants to be provided in the format that best facilitates the tenant’s understanding of the notice and advises the tenant of any applicable appellate rights.

(2) ALTERNATIVE FORMATS.—

(A) REQUIREMENT.—If a tenant has elected to receive information from another agency of the Federal Government agency in an alternative format to the standard format, including in a language other than English or in braille, large type, or audio format, the Secretary shall send all notices referred to in paragraph (1) in such alternative format, together with the notice in the standard format.

(B) INDICATION OF PREFERENCE.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall make available a mechanism for tenants to indicate their preference for receipt of notices referred to in paragraph (1) in alternative formats and shall provide such notices to tenants in accordance with their indicated preference.
(C) Action on Tenant’s Behalf.—The Secretary shall provide for another individual, upon a signed certification that the tenant has authorized such action, to act on a tenant’s behalf in indicating a preference with respect to an alternative format of notices.

(b) Coordination Across Federal Agencies.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall consult and coordinate with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration to implement the procedures and systems necessary to comply with subsection (a)(2)(A). The Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration shall provide all information necessary to ensure such compliance.

e) Plain Language.—Within one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall revise the language on the standard notices provided pursuant to paragraph (1) to be in compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (5 U.S.C. 301 note).

(d) Timeline of Notice.—

(1) In General.—For each property financed under section 515, or 514 and 516, of title V of the Housing Act of 1949 having tenants who may be eligible for a rural housing voucher, the Secretary shall
provide notice as required by paragraph (2) within a reasonable time. In the event of eligibility due to prepayment or mortgage maturity, the Secretary shall provide initial notice as required by paragraph (2) and subsequently on an annual basis to each household following the initial notice.

(2) Initial Notice.—

(A) Prepayment.—Within 30 days of the approval by the Secretary of a borrowers’ request to prepay its loan under such section 515 or 514 and at least 120 days before the prepayment date, the Secretary shall provide written notice to each household residing in the property that informs them of the prepayment approval, the possible actions that may happen with respect to the property upon that prepayment, and how to secure a rural housing voucher.

(B) Mortgage Maturity.—Not later than the date that is 3 years before the date that the loan under such section 515 or 514 for the property will mature, the Secretary shall provide written notice to each household residing in the property that informs them of the date of the loan maturity, the possible actions
that may happen with respect to the property
upon that maturity, and how to secure a rural
housing voucher.

4 SEC. 5. LANDLORD OUTREACH.

(a) IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK PROPERTIES.—On
an annual basis, the Secretary shall identify the addresses
of the multifamily housing properties with loans financed
under section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 having
mortgages that are subject to loan acceleration or matur-
ity or rental assistance contracts that the Secretary de-
determines are at risk of being terminated within the ensu-
ing 4 years without an extension of the rental assistance
contract.

(b) EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TO LANDLORDS.—
The Secretary shall engage in education and outreach to
landlords, using multiple modalities and in-person out-
reach, to promote landlord interest in accepting rural
housing vouchers that may be issued to tenants of such
identified at-risk properties.

(c) AREA.—Such education and outreach shall be
performed first with landlords owning properties with
dwelling units for rent that are nearest to such identified
at-risk properties and if, after extensive outreach, the Sec-
retary determines there to be insufficient interest among
such landlords the Secretary shall expand the radius for
the area of such education and outreach progressively up
to an area within a 20-mile radius of such identified at-

(d) Sharing of Information.—The Secretary of
Housing and Urban Development shall provide the Sec-
retary of Agriculture with technical assistance and train-
ing on conducting landlord outreach and education, such
as partnering with at the public housing agency whose ju-
risdiction is nearest to an identified at-risk property.

SEC. 6. STRATEGIC PLAN.

(a) Establishment.—The Secretary shall, not later
than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act,
establish and submit to the Congress a strategic plan that
identifies—

(1) for each of the ensuing 5 years, the multi-
family housing properties with loans financed under
section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 having rent-
al assistance contracts that Secretary determines are
at risk of exiting the portfolio, whether because of
the loan being paid off or for some other reason;

(2) for properties at risk of exiting the portfolio
in the next year, tenants whose leases would expire
or come up for renewal within one, two, and three
months of the anticipated exit date of the property;
(3) a process for regularly updating the information described in (2), as precisely as possible, as the anticipated exit date of the property approaches;

(4) a method for identifying at-risk tenants who may not receive a rural housing voucher;

(5) an outreach strategy to inform such at-risk tenants of their status and options for remaining housed;

(6) metrics and procedures to track the status and outcomes of such at-risk tenants; and

(7) a comprehensive procedure to ensure at-risk tenants have their vouchers and have a suitable dwelling to rent using the voucher by the time their lease expires or comes up for renewal.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall fully and expeditiously implement the strategic plan established pursuant to subsection (a) within two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) REPORTS.—During the 30-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall provide a report to the Congress not less frequently than every three months on the status of the development of the strategic plan and the implementation of the plan.
(d) Coordination Across Federal Government.—To the extent other Federal agencies are identified under the strategic plan established pursuant to subsection (a) as being necessary for the implementation of the plan, it shall be the duty of each such agency so identified to assist to the greatest extent practical in fulfilling relevant requests by the Secretary of Agriculture.

SEC. 7. Protection of At-Risk Tenants.

(a) Waiver and Modification.—The Secretary may waive any waiting period or deadline involved in the disbursement or execution of a rural housing voucher for at-risk tenants as the Secretary deems necessary to ensure such tenants remain housed.

(b) Identifying Housing Stock.—The Secretary shall work with interested landlords identified in section 5 of this Act to pre-clear dwellings near at-risk tenants as available for rental using a rural housing voucher.

SEC. 8. Reports to Congress.

(a) Initial Report.—The Secretary shall, not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, submit to the Congress and make publicly available on the website of the Department of Agriculture, a report detailing—

(1) for tenants in rural multifamily housing properties with loans financed under section 515 of
the Housing Act of 1949 having rental assistance contracts that terminated, the housing outcomes for such tenants one month, three months, six months, and one year after the tenant’s lease expires or is renewed; and

(2) for each of the ensuing 4 years how many rural multifamily housing properties are expected to end participation the programs under title V of the Housing Act of 1949, the number of potentially impacted residents, and how many properties are at-risk as described in section 5(a).

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—On an annual basis, the Secretary shall submit to the Congress and make publicly available on the website of the Department of Agriculture information identifying—

(1) the number of rural housing vouchers issued during the preceding year;

(2) the reason for the issuance such vouchers, including whether the mortgage on a property was prepaid, the mortgage for the property was foreclosed, or any other reason;

(3) whether the property was subject to any form of use restriction; and
(4) the number of vouchers that were not renewed that were previously utilized by tenants and the reason for non-renewal of the voucher.

SEC. 9. REGULATIONS.

The Secretary shall issue any regulations that may be necessary to carry out this Act and shall issue a notice of proposed rulemaking for such regulations not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 10. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary for the Secretary of Agriculture to—

(1) hire additional staff to implement and enforce this Act; and

(2) obtain such additional supplies and information technology to carry out this Act.