Governor Carney and DSHA Announce Reopening of COVID-19 Rental Assistance Program

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$200 million in financial assistance available to Delawareans struggling to pay rent due to COVID-19 crisis

WILMINGTON – Joined by U.S. Sen. Tom Carper and U.S. Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester, Governor John Carney and Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) Director Anas Ben Addi on Friday announced the reopening of the Delaware Housing Assistance Program (DEHAP), which provides financial assistance for renters affected by COVID-19. Landlords and tenants can apply for assistance beginning Monday, March 22, 2021 using DSHA's application portal.

DEHAP provides financial assistance to renters experiencing unemployment or other financial hardship due to the COVID-19 health crisis. Out of $25 billion dedicated nationally through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, the State of Delaware was awarded $200 million in emergency rent relief funds. Governor Carney has tasked DSHA with administering these funds for the state through DEHAP.

Per the new program guidelines, DEHAP now allows for up to 12 months of financial assistance, with the possibility of extended assistance for an additional three months. DEHAP can cover rent arrears dating from April 2020 and forward and current rent due. Payments will be made directly to landlords and property managers.

"I am thankful to our federal partners who were able to secure this significant funding for our state to help address the

*needs of tenants and landlords at this time," **said Governor John Carney**. "We know many Delawareans continue to face a very challenging time as they struggle with the economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis. By reopening the rental assistance program with this funding, we hope to help more Delaware families stay in their homes both during and after the pandemic."*

"For more than a year now, many Delawareans have been facing a very difficult and uncertain financial future," **said DSHA Director Anas Ben Addi**. "By reopening DEHAP, we can continue our efforts to keep Delawareans in their homes and prevent evictions. We are committed to distributing these rental assistance funds as quickly and efficiently as possible to help stabilize the rental market and provide help for as many eligible renters and landlords as we can throughout the state."

"As our state continues to feel the effect of the pandemic, we need to continue doing as much as we can to help our neighbors in need keep the roof over their heads," **said U.S. Sen. Chris Coons**. "I was proud to support passing legislation that provided rental assistance funding for Delaware, and I hope these funds will go a long way to help Delawareans at a time when they need it most."

"I was proud to join my colleagues to vote for this funding to help Delawareans facing financial hardships through no fault of their own," **said U.S. Sen. Tom Carper**. "Even now, more than a year in to the pandemic, we are still seeing a significant economic impact from this crisis, especially in the rental market. This funding for DEHAP will help some of our state's most vulnerable residents remain in their homes, avoiding eviction and homelessness."

"Many of our state's renters, particularly those with lower incomes, have been disproportionately impacted by layoffs, reduced work hours, or childcare needs resulting from the pandemic," **said U.S. Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester**. "I am honored to help announce the reopening of DEHAP and support funding for it. This program will provide much-needed relief to our state's renters who have been struggling since the start of this crisis."

DEHAP was first launched by DSHA in March of 2020, making DSHA the first housing finance agency in the country to launch a rental assistance program to assist tenants who were struggling to pay their rent because of a COVID-19 job loss or loss of income. When first launched, DSHA received an overwhelming response to the program and paused it to reassess funding availability. The program reopened in August 2020 and accepted applications through December.

In total, thus far, DSHA has approved nearly $15 million in rental assistance funding for 4,188 households since the DEHAP program was first launched.

Friday's announcement event was held at The Flats, a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit site in Wilmington owned by Woodlawn Trustees. Several of the tenants living at The Flats received DEHAP assistance under previous versions of the program.

"This is such an important program for our families, many of whom have been directly affected by the pandemic with a job loss or other loss of income," **said Woodlawn Trustees CEO Rich Pryzwara.** "We are honored to host today's announcement event and look forward to helping our residents who are in need of assistance apply for help from DEHAP."

Speaking at Friday's event, **Andre Frantone, a resident of The Flats,** said he was laid off from his job as an executive chef at a local hotel due to the pandemic. In October, Frantone received about $4,000 in rental assistance from DEHAP. "This program was a lifeline for my family and me, and I am grateful for the assistance it provided us," he said. "Without the help from DEHAP, I'm not sure what would have happened to my family. I encourage anyone in Delaware who is struggling to pay their rent to look into the program and see if it can help them."

To qualify for DEHAP, households must be at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the county in which they

reside as well as meet several other criteria. Per federal guidelines, DSHA will prioritize applications for households at or below 50% of the area median income level and households where one or more members are currently unemployed and have been for at least 90 days. Income eligibility per county and other program requirements can be found on DSHA's new DEHAP website at www.decovidhousinghelp.com or by calling 866-935-0407. The website provides step-by-step tutorial videos and Frequently Asked Questions for landlords and tenants who plan to initiate applications to DEHAP. Both landlords and tenants can initiate an application for DEHAP, but they will need to work together to ensure proper documentation is provided by both parties.

Tenants who received DEHAP assistance previously may receive rental assistance again for rent arrears or rent not already paid by DEHAP, but they will need to reapply for the program since eligibility requirements and program documentation have changed.

The application portal will go live on Monday, March 22, 2021. Tenants and landlords are encouraged to review the eligibility information and required documentation in advance at www.decovidhousinghelp.com so they are prepared to submit their applications when the portal opens.

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