



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING &
LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

Maura T. Healey, Governor ◆ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ◆ Edward M. Augustus Jr., Secretary

**PHN 2024-03
Addendum 1**

To: All Local Housing Authority Executive Directors
From: Chris DeVore, Director, Bureau of Housing Management
Subject: PHN 2024-03: Extension of Vacant Unit Policies for 2024 to Remain in Effect for FY 2025
Date: October 9, 2024

Need to Know

1. Updates to EOHLC Vacant Unit Policy and processes announced in PHN 2024-03 will remain in effect indefinitely, though EOHLC may change policies and processes by guidance at any point in the future.
2. EOHLC continues its focus on reducing vacancies in state-aided public housing in partnership with Local Housing Authorities (LHAs).

Context

EOHLC created the Vacancy Initiative in September 2023 to address increased vacancies in state-aided public housing and extended and updated the policies and processes associative with this initiative through end of Fiscal Year 2024 in [PHN 2024-03](#).

Together, LHAs and EOHLC have made progress on reducing overall vacancies by approximately 200 units since July 31, 2023. Operational vacancies, which exclude funded modernization projects, insurance loss, and repurposed units, have dropped by approximately 40%. Additionally, since the launch of centralized screening and the vacancy initiative in September 2023, LHAs have leased 11% more units per months than in prior years. EOHLC and LHAs look to maintain this momentum through continuing the current vacancy policies. **This PHN extends vacancy policies and processes indefinitely**, though EOHLC may change policies and processes by guidance at any point in the future.

Extension of Vacancy Policies (PHN 2024-03)

The updates to EOHLC Vacant Unit Policy announced in will remain in affect unless adjusted by future EOHLC guidance. These include:

- A. List of allowable waiver categories and review standards (see PHN 2024-03 Attachment A, dated 4/5/24);

- B. Improved coordination between Housing Management and Capital Bureaus on funding for rehabilitating vacant units requiring significant investment per [PHN 2016-34](#) and standards for funded modernization project waivers;
- C. Automated email notifications to LHAs for vacant units about to incur fees;
- D. Active tracking of vacancies by LHA on a monthly basis triggering EOHLC offers of technical assistance to LHAs with concerning vacancy rates;
- E. Operating budget exemptions available for LHAs with high vacancy rates and operating reserves below 35% at prior FYE or upon reconsideration of current operating reserve status. Budget exemptions will also be available for LHAs that have a unique staffing issue affecting vacant unit turnovers. Otherwise, EOHLC expects that LHAs have the financial resources through budget and operating reserves to address vacancies; and
- F. Continued availability of certain LHAs and MANAHRO (see Attachment B) for vacant unit turnovers or CHAMP assistance.

Our partnership has increased our understanding of what is needed to turn units over in a timely manner. EOHLC and LHAs more quickly communicate to identify vacant units that require additional funding or technical support for maintenance, capital needs, or tenant selection. We look forward to the continued increase in occupancy of state-aided public units that provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to low-income households.