



# News Release

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## **HACA Board Chair Attends White House Convening on HUD's Proposed Smoke-Free Rule**

Carl S. Richie Jr., Chairman of the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) Board of Commissioners and Senior Vice President of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, recently joined public housing and health advocates from across the country at a White House Convening on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Proposed Smoke-Free Rule.

HUD Secretary Julián Castro, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing Lourdes Castro Ramírez facilitated a dialogue between public housing authorities, health-related groups and federal partners to discuss common concerns, share best practices and exchange information.

"I was proud to represent the Housing Authority of the City of Austin at the White House convening, and to share best practices with my colleagues and to help HUD think through the implementation of the policy and its impact on smaller housing authorities that have yet to adopt the policy," Richie said. "This is not a one-size-fits-all solution. People want to adopt this rule, but we've got to let each jurisdiction work through their own unique issues."

HUD's proposed rule would require each public housing agency in the U.S. to implement a smoke-free policy for 1.2 million public housing units and common areas no later than 18 months from the effective date of the final rule. According to HUD, the rule will help improve the health of more than 760,000 children and help public housing agencies save \$153 million annually in health care, repairs and preventable fires.

HACA's smoke-free initiative, adopted by the Board of Commissioners in September 2015, has its roots in a 2009 recommendation by HUD that urged housing authorities nationwide to implement no-smoking policies in their public housing units. Further, HACA surveyed its residents to determine their preferences for a smoke-free policy.

The survey results indicated that a large majority of HACA residents are non-smokers and are bothered by tobacco smoke entering their homes. Additionally, a majority of tenants prefer smoke-free housing. A significant percentage of tenants reported having asthma and/or other health conditions like lung disease and cancer. Overall, tenants showed support for health programming and interest in smoking cessation assistance.

The purpose of HACA's smoke-free policy is to create a healthier, safer and cleaner living environment for more than 4,300 individuals living in public housing – 48 percent are children, 12 percent are elderly, and 31 percent are people with disabilities.

Approximately, 612 public housing authorities across the country have adopted a smoke-free policy.

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