

# HUD SECRETARY CASTRO ANNOUNCES NEW RULE MAKING PUBLIC HOUSING SMOKE-FREE

*Proposed Rule Open for Public Comment for 60 Days*

WASHINGTON –Today, U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julián Castro joined Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy in Alexandria, VA to announce a proposed rule to make the nation's public housing properties entirely smoke-free. HUD's proposed rule would require more than 3,100 public housing agencies (PHAs) across the country to implement smoke-free policies in their developments within 18 months of the final rule. **Read HUD's proposed rule.**

Under HUD's proposed rule, PHAs must implement a policy prohibiting lit tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars or pipes) in all living units, indoor common areas, administrative offices and all outdoor areas within 25 feet of housing and administrative office buildings. HUD is seeking public comment on this proposed rule for the next 60 days.

"We have a responsibility to protect public housing residents from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, especially the elderly and children who suffer from asthma and other respiratory diseases," said HUD Secretary Julián Castro. "This proposed rule will help improve the health of more than 760,000 children and help public housing agencies save \$153 million every year in healthcare, repairs and preventable fires."

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cigarette smoking kills 480,000 Americans each year, making it the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. By reducing the public health risks associated with tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, the proposed smoke-free rule will enhance the effectiveness of HUD's efforts to provide increased public health protection for residents of public housing. The rule will impact the more than 940,000 units that are currently not smoke-free, including more than 500,000 units inhabited by elderly households.

"Everyone – no matter where they live – deserves a chance to grow up in a healthy, smoke-free home," said U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy. "There is no safe level of secondhand smoke. So, when 58 million Americans – including 15 million children – are exposed to secondhand smoke, we have an obligation to act. That is what Secretary Castro is doing with this proposal."

Since 2009, HUD strongly encouraged Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to adopt smoke-free policies in their buildings and common areas. During this time, more than 600 PHAs and tribally designated housing entities adopted smoke-free policies. Currently, there are nearly 1.2 million public housing units across the country. Through HUD's voluntary policy and local initiatives, more than 228,000 public housing units are already smoke-free. If finalized, the proposed smoke-free rule announced today would expand the impact to more 940,000 public housing units.

HUD's proposed smoke-free rule will also help reduce damage and maintenance costs associated with smoking. It is estimated that smoking causes over 100,000 fires each year, resulting in more than 500 death and close to half a billion dollars in direct property damage; additionally, smoking is the lead cause of fire related deaths in multifamily buildings. A 2014 CDC study estimated that prohibiting smoking in public housing would yield an annual cost savings of \$153 million, including \$94 million in secondhand smoke-related health care, \$43 million in renovation of smoking-permitted units, and \$16 million in smoking-related fire losses.

This proposed rule will be open for public comment for the next 60 days. Interested persons may submit comments electronically at **[www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)**. Comments may also be submitted by mail to the Regulations Divisions, Office of General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Room 10276, Washington, DC 20410.

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