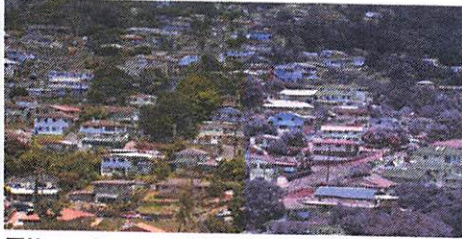


# Hawaii rental assistance program puts hold on applications



File photo (Source: Hawaii News Now)

By [Associated Press](#) | October 19, 2020 at 4:36 AM HST - Updated October 19 at 4:36 AM

HILO, Hawaii (AP) — A Hawaii state program providing rental assistance to tenants struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily stopped accepting applications. The Rent Relief and Housing Assistance Program called a halt to applications after reaching its processing capacity, The Hawaii Tribune-Herald reported Sunday.

The program launched in early September received more than 20,000 applications and overwhelmed Catholic Charities Hawaii and Aloha United Way, which are helping administer the program.

The charities are working out how to manage the current backlog.

“Right now we’re meeting with them daily to figure out how to work through it as quickly as possible,” said Kent Miyasaki, spokesman for the Hawaii Housing Finance and Development Corporation.

The program was expected to disburse \$100 million in federal coronavirus relief funding through monthly payments to the landlords of tenants struggling to pay rent.

The program approved \$5.8 million in payouts, although only \$2.3 million has been distributed, Miyasaki said.

Oahu households are eligible for monthly payments of up to \$2,000, while households on all other islands are eligible for maximum payments of \$1,500 until Dec. 28.

The program also expanded to provide support for mortgage payments and rent beginning this month and can backdate payments to March 1.

Problems with the applications have contributed to the processing delay, Miyasaki said.

“I think about 60% of the applications have bad information in them,” Miyasaki said.

Other significant causes of the bottleneck include the need to collect proof of hardship from applicants and obtain payment information from landlords.

The Housing Finance and Development Corporation will establish a processing center at the Hawaii Convention Center to speed the process, Miyasaki said.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some — especially older adults and people with existing health problems — it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

The number of infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

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