

HOUSING AGENCY LAUNCHES HOMEOWNERSHIP INITIATIVE FOR DISABLED

BISMARCK – The North Dakota Housing Finance Agency (NDHFA) has received approval from the state's Industrial Commission to launch a homeownership initiative called HomeAccess that will provide low-interest mortgage loans to disabled individuals and their families.

"Having an individual in a family with a physical or mental impairment can result in medical expenses that lead to financial hardships," said Governor John Hoeven. "The HomeAccess initiative is another tool to help North Dakotans realize their dream of owning a home."

Through HomeAccess, up to five percent of NDHFA's available mortgage revenue bond (MRB) proceeds, which are used by the agency to finance loans for first-time homebuyers, will be available to households in which at least one family member is permanently physically or mentally disabled. The disability will be documented by either an SSDI award letter or certification by CommunityWorks North Dakota, lead agency for the North Dakota HomeChoice Coalition.

"NDHFA typically issues about \$100 million in bonds each year, making approximately \$5 million available for the initiative," said Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson. "Currently, there are very few grant or loan programs available to assist with the housing costs of the disabled."

"There is a lot of enthusiasm over the idea of an initiative to expand homeownership opportunities for the disabled," said Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem. "Putting these deals together many require overcoming some obstacles, but the reward is worth the challenge."

The Internal Revenue Code, which authorizes the use of MRB's for home loans, requires that at least 95 percent of bond proceeds be used for mortgage loans made to first-time homebuyers. With the approval of bond and underwriter counsel, the Industrial Commission has authorized NDHFA to offer the disabled populations the first opportunity to utilize the identified funds.

Under HomeAccess, the financing provided by NDHFA will not be restricted to first-time buyers. In addition to the disability qualifier, NDHFA's standard mortgage program income and acquisition cost limits will apply to the borrowers. HomeAccess buyers must intend to occupy the home as their principal residence. Loans are expected to be originated by NDHFA participating lenders at the FirstHome Program interest rate currently in effect at the time a loan reservation is made.

The North Dakota HomeChoice Coalition's mission is to make homeownership dreams come true for people with disabilities. The coalition, lead by CommunityWorks North Dakota, consists of representatives of the independent living centers, the North Dakota Association for the Disabled, Community Action Agencies, the Bank of North Dakota, the Fannie Mae North Dakota Partnership Office, several private lenders, and NDHFA.

The Industrial Commission of North Dakota, consisting of Governor John Hoeven, as chairman, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem and Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson, oversees the NDHFA. For more information, contact NDHFA at (701) 328-8080, (800) 292-8621 or (800) 366-6888 (TTY). Information is also available online at www.ndhfa.org.