

Palm Beach Post: Elderly housing bill wins approval

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WASHINGTON - A bill to make it easier to develop and preserve federally supported housing for low-income elderly residents was unanimously adopted by a congressional committee today.

The bill by Rep. Tim Mahoney, a Democrat from Palm Beach Gardens, would streamline the administrative process used in approving federal Section 202 housing projects; make it easier for non-profit organizations such as religious groups to obtain outside funding; revise the system of rental assistance to cover emergencies such as spikes in utility costs; and allow property owners to obtain renovation loans without having to significantly increase rents.

"The housing crisis for our seniors is severe and this bill is a step in the right direction in giving our seniors the security they deserve," Mahoney said just before the bill was approved by the House Financial Services Committee.

Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., the committee chairman, said the bill would make it easier for faith-based organizations to participate in the low-income elderly housing market.

A 2002 report commissioned by Congress predicted that 730,000 additional rent-assisted housing units would be needed for low income people 65 and older by 2020. A recent report by AARP estimated there are 10 elderly people waiting for every Section 202 unit that becomes available.

The bill is expected to be considered by the full House within the next few weeks.