

July 2, 2020

MD Rent Relief Now!

\$30 Million is a Drop in the Bucket

Governor Larry Hogan:

With evictions set to resume on July 25, the COVID-19 pandemic has left hundreds of thousands of Maryland families on the brink of homelessness. Such a wave of evictions and homelessness will jeopardize public health and the early stages of economic recovery.

The undersigned organizations and Maryland residents call on you to allocate at least \$175 million from Maryland's \$1.3 Billion federal Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to rental assistance and eviction prevention for tenants unable to pay the rent. We also urge you to expand the current eviction moratorium to include all types of eviction cases, and to extend the moratorium until the public health emergency has ended and sufficient financial assistance is available for residents to avoid eviction. There are extensive reports that landlords are, as a pretext for a tenant's inability to pay the rent, sending notices to terminate tenancies allowing them to initiate Tenant Holding Over actions against tenants. These actions for which there are few defenses will lead to massive displacement of tenants.

Over 500,000 Marylanders have filed for unemployment benefits since the pandemic began. It is increasingly clear that unemployment benefits are not enough to meet the scale of this crisis. Rental housing providers are reporting a rent delinquency rate of 22%. Almost one-quarter of renters in Maryland are not able to pay the rent. The rate is even higher in family-oriented, affordable buildings -- where most of the "essential workers" during this pandemic reside.

These essential workers who are disproportionately [Black and Brown families have been hit hardest by the coronavirus, and are now most at risk of eviction in the wake of the pandemic.](#)

[Organizers of the recent protests have identified housing instability as a major issue of race equity](#) that this administration should address in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder.

We are told that the unemployment insurance system has been fixed for the vast majority of people who have applied for benefits, and yet these pending evictions and delinquencies remain. This is likely because many individuals are denied unemployment benefits or may not qualify for benefits, and yet these residents have no less need to avoid eviction and the devastating consequences of eviction. Additionally, some seniors and [people with disabilities who do not participate in the workforce continue to be at the highest risk of eviction and infection from COVID-19.](#) An expanded eviction moratorium and rental assistance program would reduce this risk of infection and likely hospitalization for persons with disabilities, thus decreasing pressure on Maryland's health care system.

Evictions also [cost the State money in terms of increased costs for Medicaid, foster care, and shelter for persons who are homeless.](#) While some jurisdictions like Baltimore City have set up rental assistance programs, we know that this is not going to meet the need -- which will only grow at the end of July when the \$600 additional unemployment benefit ends.

Maryland has \$1.3 Billion in federal CARES Act money known as Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF). These funds cannot be spent to fill gaps in Maryland's budget. [Pennsylvania just allocated \\$175](#)

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[million from its Coronavirus Relief Funds toward rental assistance and mortgage relief.](#) At least 16 other states are also implementing emergency rental assistance programs.

Maryland's failure to act would show a cruel, callousness to the potential homelessness of our brothers and sisters. We urge you to act now and:

1. Allocate at least \$175 million to rental assistance and eviction prevention in Maryland from Coronavirus Relief Funds or another source;
2. Expand the eviction moratorium to cover all types of evictions cases and extend the moratorium until the later of January 1, 2021, or until the public health emergency has ended and sufficient financial assistance is available for residents to avoid eviction; and
3. Take all other necessary steps to prevent homelessness and evictions during the public health emergency.

Regards,

Public Justice Center
Homeless Persons Representation Project
Beyond the Boundaries
Montgomery County Renters Alliance
ACLU of Maryland
CASA
Santoni, Vocci & Ortega, LLC
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Respons.
Disability Rights Maryland
BRIDGE Maryland, Inc.
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Community Development Network of MD
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Right to Housing Alliance
Southeast Comm. Dev. Corp.
Homes for America
Mont. Co. Democratic Socialists of America
Bridge Maryland
Greater Vict. and Deliver. Church of Jesus Christ
Fair Development Roundtable
Catholic Comm. of St Anthony of Padua, St Dominic and Most Precious Blood (Baltimore)
Immigration Outreach Service Center
Assoc. of Community Services of Howard Co.
The Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Ctr. of the Univ. of MD, Balt.
Episcopal Refugee and Immigrant Ctr. Alliance
Baltimore Nonviolence Center

MD-DC Soc. of Addiction Medicine (MD-DC Chapter of the Amer. Soc.y of Addiction Med.)
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-Maryland Chapter
Woodbourne-McCabe Neighborhood Assoc.
NE Catholic Comm. Peace/Justice Committee
Jews United for Justice
Food & Water Action
Cardijn Associates
Immigration Outreach Service Center
Pax Christi-Baltimore
Advocates for Children and Youth
Maryland Chp. of the Poor People's Campaign
Sunrise Movement Baltimore
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Shrine of Little Flower Catholic Church
Baltimore Action Legal Team
Health Care for the Homeless
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Greater Wash. Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse
Arundel Community Dev. Services, Inc.
Sunrise Movement Howard County
Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP)
Baltimore City Substance Abuse Directorate
Enterprise Comm. Partners - MidAtlantic
Progressive Maryland
Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
And over 500 Maryland residents