

April 23, 2021

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

Maryland is in the midst of an eviction crisis. Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many Marylanders to lose work and face substantial losses in income, jeopardizing their ability to pay rent. Low-income households are especially vulnerable to the economic shocks resulting from the ongoing public health crisis. Our state is the eighth most expensive for housing in the nation. Even before the current public health and economic crises, more than one third of low-income renters in Maryland were cost burdened; these families often sacrifice other critical needs, such as adequate food and health care, in order to make rent. As these households have faced further reductions in income due to the pandemic, it has only become more challenging for them to cover housing costs.

The December federal stimulus package provided Maryland's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) over \$400 million in funding to help alleviate this problem, and we anticipate that the state will receive an additional similar allocation from the American Rescue Plan. However, the state and counties are still in the process of standing up programs for distribution of ERAP funds; even as programs launch, it will take weeks to process applications and administer funds. In the meantime, the courts have begun hearing non-payment of rent cases, and families and individuals who have not been able to pay rent are facing eviction despite the fact that they are eligible to receive rental assistance in a few short months.

Maryland needs a targeted 90 – 120 day moratorium on failure to pay rent and tenant holding over eviction hearings in order to provide time for rental assistance programs to go into effect and serve their intended purpose: to prevent mass eviction and displacement.

Right now in many counties across the state, thousands of people are suddenly simultaneously facing eviction and courts are using "rocket dockets" to work through case backlogs. While the state and federal eviction moratoriums currently in place are well-intentioned, they are not stopping many of these evictions because they are not all encompassing and require renters to attend court hearings and provide documentation of income loss. In this challenging time, many people fail to attend hearings for a number of reasons, including COVID-related health concerns and inability to take time off of work. In order to be effective, the 90 – 120 day moratorium should apply to all residential properties and cover all stages of the eviction process.

A targeted 90 – 120 day moratorium on failure to pay rent and tenant holding over eviction hearings would benefit tenants and landlords across the state. It would provide renter households time to apply for assistance and resolve their rent arrears, eliminating the threat of eviction. For landlords, a moratorium on hearings would reduce the time-consuming and costly process of evicting tenants and re-leasing units; once applications are processed and funds are distributed, landlords will receive the rent due to them. Landlords may also be encouraged to provide information on ERAP to their tenants, assist them in applying for funds, and in many cases, can start the application on behalf of their tenants.

We have the funding to keep people in their homes, but now time has become a scarce resource. The situation is urgent. Governor Hogan, it is imperative that you take the critical step of declaring a targeted 90 – 120 day moratorium on failure to pay rent and tenant holding over eviction hearings in order to provide time for assistance to get to families and individuals who critically need it. It is unconscionable for people to be evicted and displaced when, but for a few weeks, they would have the assistance they need to stabilize their housing. Please act now.

Sincerely,

Montgomery Housing Alliance
Community Development Network of Maryland
Affordable Housing Conference of Montgomery County
Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission (HRDC)
Am Kolel
Anne Arundel County Community Action Agency, Inc.
APAH
Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County
Arundel Community Development Services, Inc.
The Arc Montgomery County
Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership
Baltimore-Washington Conference of the UMC
BMom
CareerCatchers, Inc.
Carpe Diem Arts, Inc.
CASA
CASH Campaign of Maryland
CCCSMD
Centro de Apoyo Familiar
Charity Connect
Charles County Charitable Trust
Clara Barton Center for Children
Clergy United for the Transformation of Sandtown
Coalition Homes, Inc.
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Committee for Montgomery
Community Assistance Network

Community Bridges, Inc.
Community Law Center
Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc.
Disability Rights Maryland
Diversified Housing Development, Inc.
Dumbarton United Methodist Church
Dundalk Renaissance Corporation
EveryMind
Family Learning Solutions, Inc.
Food Justice DMV
Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc.
GB Youth Media
Greater Baybrook Alliance
Greater DC Diaper Bank
Habitat for Humanity of Carroll County
Habitat for Humanity Choptank
Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake
Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County
Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland
Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna
HAND|The Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers
Harbel Housing Partnership
Health Care for the Homeless
Homes for America
HomeFree-USA
Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc.
Housing Initiative Partnership
Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County
Housing Options & Planning Enterprises, Inc.
Housing Unlimited
Humanist Chaplaincy of Greater Washington, DC
Interfaith Works
JCADA
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington
Kairos Development, LLC
Latin American Youth Center
Latino Economic Development Center
Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services, Inc.
League of Women Voters of Maryland
League of Women Voters of Montgomery County
Leveling the Playing Field
Loyola University Center for Community, Service, and Justice
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Coalition of Families
Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU)

Maryland Nonprofits
Maryland Philanthropy Network
Meals on Wheels of Takoma Park/Silver Spring
Mental Health Association of Maryland
MHP
Milk Lady Farmers Markets
Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless
Montgomery County Renters Alliance, Inc.
National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter
Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc.
NeighborWorks Capital
No Boundaries Coalition
Nonprofit Montgomery
North East Housing Initiative (NEHI)
Oak Chapel United Methodist Church
Ocean City Development Corporation
Park Heights Renaissance
Project PLASE, Inc. (People Lacking Ample Shelter & Employment)
Prologue Inc.
Public Justice Center
Racial Justice Committee, St. Pius X Catholic Church
Rainbow Place Shelter
Rebuilding Together Montgomery County
Right to Housing Alliance
Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc.
Santoni, Vocci & Ortega, LLC
Saul Ewing Civil Advocacy Clinic, University of Baltimore School of Law
Shaare Tefila Congregation
Shepherds of Zion Ministries International Church
Shepherd's Table
Southeast Community Development Corporation
Southern Maryland Tri-County Community Action Committee, Inc. (SMTCCAC)
St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore
St. Vincent de Paul Church
Stop Oppressive Seizures Fund (SOS)
Strong Future Maryland
Telamon Corporation
Two Moons Food Group
United Communities Against Poverty
Zavos Architecture & Design

CC: Kenneth C. Holt, Secretary, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
Dennis R. Schrader, Secretary, Maryland Department of Health