





[Via email]

March 20, 2020

Re: We Need Bold Leadership, Not Half-Measures

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the organizations signed on to this letter, we call on you to take the measures outlined below to limit the potential exacerbating effects of the coronavirus on California's housing crisis.

While we appreciate the intent and the declarations in your recent executive order, we feel that there are both problems and limitations to it that do not rise to the level of action needed to protect both homeowners and renters and help stop the coronavirus from exacerbating California's housing crisis. With regards to renters, the current order only encourages an ineffective patchwork of approaches across the state. The ensuing confusion from the myriad levels of city and county protections exposes renters to the dangers of appearing in crowded courthouses, and many renters will have a difficult time providing the required documented loss of income described in the executive order. We need simple, effective solutions that apply to all Californians equally.

Californians take care of each other. In moments of crisis, Californians know how to pull together. Whether helping our neighbors during an earthquake or opening our homes during a wildfire, we show up for one another. We know that our families and neighborhoods are stronger, safer, and healthier when we show up and represent for one another in moments of illness and crisis.

No matter what we look like, where we live, or what's in our wallets, getting sick reminds us that we're all human and that we're all interconnected. But today, as you know, due to the lack of preparation by the Trump administration, which has been putting the interests of Wall Street above the needs of people, most of us do not have access to the testing, vaccines, and treatment we need to get and stay well.

We must stand with and for each other, against anything used to divide us, to demand the care and paid time off every one of us needs, no exceptions. Only by standing united can we rewrite the rules to ensure better health for all.

In light of this public health crisis, when it's imperative that families be stably housed, we call on you, Governor Newsom, to enact the following measures for as long as Californians are substantially affected by COVID-19:

- 1. An Immediate Moratorium on Rent Increases, All Evictions, Foreclosures & Cease Executing Writs of Possession** - We need an immediate statewide ban on rent increases, evictions and foreclosures and cease executing writs of possession. The need to protect residents that live paycheck to paycheck from the economic fallout of this virus includes protecting them against facing price gouging, eviction and homelessness. Rent increases, even minimal ones, during this time is tantamount to price gouging given the potential for lost wages, and would make renters more vulnerable to evictions. Eviction and foreclosure would only further spread this virus and make its containment harder because people would not have a home to care for the health, safety and welfare of their families. In addition, forcing renters to defend themselves in crowded eviction courts at this time is directly at odds with government guidance emphasizing the critical importance of social distancing to contain the spread of the virus. We request the governor immediately direct all County and City Marshals and Sheriffs to cease executing writs of possession until further notice. We applaud the included request in your executive order for financial institutions to implement a moratorium on foreclosures.
- 2. Moratorium on Encampments Sweeps, Closure and Vehicle Tows** - We support Western Regional Advocacy Project's call to end the enforcement/displacement actions against encampments of the unhoused during this crisis due to the necessity for sustained public health outreach and disease control as has been done in cities such as San Jose. Sweeps pose a serious health risk as they disrupt consistent access to services and ability for outreach and health workers to provide continuous care. These services are critical at this time. Shelters are not a solution for many people as they pose an increased risk of contracting illnesses due to close contact with others. Many will choose to stay on the streets where one can have more space, open air, and better ways to avoid contact spread of the virus. Forcing people to live in close quarters is not an acceptable solution. We also support the increased urgency to allow placement of unhoused community members in safe, sanitary places where they can maintain their social networks and personal belongings. The state should also provide rental assistance to people experiencing homelessness since the only way for someone to stabilize, remain healthy, and prevent exposure is in a home.
- 3. Emergency Rental or Mortgage Assistance** - We must provide support for workers who have to forgo work at no fault of their own due to the coronavirus outbreak. Government should step in by providing emergency rental or mortgage assistance to "backfill" a substantial share of any income lost to any worker during this crisis, whether or not they become sick themselves, and regardless of classification as an employee or contractor. This also encourages workers to stay home when sick rather than risking spread of the virus by continuing to work to prevent income loss. We suggest this is done via a sliding scale so that

these resources are equitably distributed and drawn from the rainy day fund, as that fund was created exactly for dire situations like these.

4. **Suspension of rents and mortgages-** The state must call on banks and lenders to suspend mortgages providing financial relief for homeowners and landlords, including supporting non-profit housing providers to remain sustainable, and, in turn, all of their tenants. Mortgages and rents should be suspended and forgiven immediately (April 1st, 2020 at the latest) and continuing for the duration of this crisis, including a recovery period after the state of emergency is lifted. Mortgages shouldn't be accruing interest either. Even before this crisis, millions of Californians were already severely rent burdened, living paycheck to paycheck, and on the brink of eviction and homelessness. With no current plan in place for Californians with no paid leave, no savings, no job security and being laid off as we speak, the recommended public health social distancing measures are, at best, delayed de facto eviction orders. Even temporary foreclosure and eviction moratoriums will require homeowners and renters to pay back, what may become, insurmountable debts. We can't afford these interconnected economic and health crises! The only holistic solution that will actually protect renters and homeowners alike is to suspend and forgive mortgage and rental payments now, the way that France has.
5. **Prohibit Utility Shut-Offs and Rate Increases, Halt Application of Late Fees, and Reinstitute Services Immediately-** Widespread loss of income will cause some of the most vulnerable individuals and families to fall behind on payments for basic services including water, gas, internet, phone service and electricity. All public and private utilities and service providers should be prohibited from shutting off service, increasing rates, or applying late fees during the public health crisis. Shutting off utilities will increase suffering and economic instability while also undermining public health goals by preventing appropriate sanitation and dislocating people from homes. Accordingly, all public and private utilities doing business in the state should halt all utility shut-offs and related fees during this crisis. We applaud the action recently taken by the CPUC to halt customer disconnections for non-payment, and we hope that your office can encourage utility companies and service providers outside of their jurisdiction to follow suit.

As organizations representing Californians affected daily by our housing stability and homelessness crisis, we agree with these measures and sign in support. Tenants and homeowners across California need answers before April 1st to ensure stability for millions of families. We are prepared to take collective action to protect ourselves in this moment of crisis.

Governor Newsom, help us stop the coronavirus from exacerbating California's housing crisis!

Respectfully,

Housing Now!- Sponsor

Additional Signatories-

ACCE
ACT LA
ACLU of California
AFSCME 3299
Affordable Homeless Housing Alternatives (AHHA)
Affordable Housing Network of Santa Clara County
Anti-Eviction Mapping Project
Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus
Asian Solidarity Collective
Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII)
Beach Cities for Housing
Bend The Arc: Jewish Action
Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center
Bill Sorro Housing Program (BiSHoP)
Burbank Tenants’ Rights Committee
California Alliance of Retired Americans (CARA)
California Coalition for Rural Housing (CCRH)
California Partnership
California Reinvestment Coalition (CRC)
California Renters Caucus
California YIMBY
Causa Justa/ Just Cause
Central Coast Alliance United for a Stable (CAUSE)
Centro Cultural de México del condado de Orange
Central Valley Empowerment Alliance
CHIRLA
Chispa
Coalition for Economic Survival, Los Angeles (CES)
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLESPA)
Council of Community Housing Organizations (CCHO)
Communities Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE)
Community Housing Partnership
Community Water Center
Courage California
Crenshaw Subway Coalition
Downey HELPS
East Bay Democratic Socialists of America
East Bay for Everyone
East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO)
Eastside LEADS
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Eviction Defense Center (Oakland)

Eviction Defense Collaborative
Eviction Defense Network (EDN)
Fair Rents for Redwood City (43)
Faith in Action Bay Area
Faith in the Valley
Glendale Tenants Union
GLIDE
Ground Game LA
Grow The Richmond
Health Leads
HEART LA
Hollywood YIMBY
Homes for All California
Homes For Whittier
House Sacramento
Housing for All Burlingame
Housing Is a Human Right - AIDS Healthcare Foundation
Housing Is a Human Right - Orange County
Housing Long Beach
Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco
Housing Rights Center
Inner City Law Center
Inner City Struggle
Jobs with Justice San Francisco
Just Cities/the Dellums Institute for Social Justice
KIWA (Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance)
Ktown YIMBY
LA Black Worker Center
LA Forward
LA Voice
Laguna Woods Village YIMBY
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Latino Health Access
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability
Liberty Hill Foundation
Long Beach Residents Empowered (LiBRE)
Long Beach Tenants Union
Long Beach YIMBY
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)
Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU)
Manufactured Housing Action (MH Action)
Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA)

Menlo Together
Monument Impact
Movement for Housing Justice
Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA)
National Assn. of Social Workers, California Chapter (NASW-CA)
National Council of Jewish Women, Los Angeles (NCJW-LA) 43
Neighborly Santa Cruz
North Bay Organizing Project
OCCORD
One Redwood City
Orange County Equality Coalition
Orange County Poverty Alleviation Coalition
Peninsula for Everyone
People for Housing - Orange County YIMBY
People Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER)
People Organizing to Demand Environmental & Economic Rights (PODER)
People Power Media
PICO California
PolicyLink
Public Advocates
Public Counsel
Richmond LAND
Sacramento Housing Alliance (SHA)
Sacred Heart Community Service
San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition
San Francisco Housing Development Corporation
San Francisco Tenants Union (SFTU)
Santa Cruz Tenants Association
Santa Cruz YIMBY
Senior & Disability Action
Si En Mi Barrio
Silicon Valley De-Bug
Silicon Valley DSA
Social Eco Education
SOMCAN
Sonoma County Tenants Union
Sonoma Valley Housing Group
South Bay Community Land Trust
South Bay YIMBY
Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing (SCANPH)
Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE)
Tenants Together
Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC)

TODEC Legal Center
TransForm
UC Student-Workers Union UAW 2865
University of California Student Association
Uplift Inglewood Coalition
Urban Environmentalists
Urban Habitat
Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition
VietRISE 43
We The People - SD
Yalla Indivisible
YIMBY Action
YIMBY Democrats of San Diego County
YIMBY Inland Empire
YIMBY Voice