

RE: COVID-19 and Rental Housing Relief

Dear Committee Members,

In these uncertain times, using the powers of government to add calm and protection is admirable. I would ask that in crafting a plan to keep residents in their homes that you consider:

--Many resident will remain employed working remotely and or continue being paid through other arrangements; others will certainly be out of income. A blanket ban on evictions may embolden some folks to forgo paying rent or other charges even though they are able to pay.

--Deferred rent payments are in reality difficult to collect. Many tenants cannot afford additional expenses beyond their rent. I understand that deferred payments may be a necessary tool at this juncture. But, please understand that the likely result will be landlords only realizing collecting a fraction of these deferred amounts.

--It is in the best interest of everyone that evictions related to tenant's failure to follow rules and bad behavior be allowed to go forward. This is important now more than ever given that people are spending more time at home and disputes between neighbors are likely to be on the rise.

--Please keep in mind that landlords face ongoing expenses for mortgages, taxes, insurance and maintenance. Some landlords have reserves that they can cover these expense with for a while. Other landlords operate on a paycheck-to-paycheck basis and will soon be facing hard decisions without rent income.

--Many of us have had at least a portion of our reserves invested in the stock market. Those reserves have dwindled due to recent market losses. This limits our ability to shoulder ongoing costs without rental income.

--If landlords are going to lose their right of remedy in court; tenants should lose some of their rights as well. In these unprecedented times, please set aside waiver and timeline requirements for repairs so long as landlords are making good faith effort to resolve problems.

Thank you for the difficult work that you are doing. By working together, we will get through this crisis.

Scott Smith

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