

Dear Legislators,

During this time, we need steady leadership that provides common sense and thought-through solutions to this crisis.

Part of this is ensuring that working families living paycheck to paycheck are able to stay housed.

As a shelter provider, I encourage you, as well as your fellow lawmakers, to make the right choice by choosing to compensate shelter providers directly for rental payment assistance during this crisis. Several of the permanent rental assistance programs we encounter every day employ this same model of direct payment to the provider.

I understand that this situation puts many working families at risk. By making payment directly to landlords, we can cover our costs and keep providing shelter for people affected.

By not doing this, there is no guarantee that money will get to us to cover our mortgages and other overhead, forcing us close units.

I want to keep people in my units, so I am strongly urging you to direct payment to shelter providers to keep people housed.

- Not all tenants need help. While many have been temporarily suspended from working, many are working from home, or have resources available to help them weather the storm. There needs to be some sort of needs test to determine whether the inability to pay rent is related to Covid-19 or not. Tenants should have to provide some sort of documentation from their employer that there is no work available, and that unemployment benefits for the household do not meet their needs for food, shelter and utilities. Gathering this data could also provide much-needed information to the state regarding impacted communities. This could help inform future planning for unexpected crises that will undoubtedly come our way.

We plan to give tenants grace on the late fees at our office. We will be requiring them to complete rent-deferment forms so that when the rent comes available later (from government or employment sources) the landlord/property owner can be made whole. It is important to keep receiving the rents so we can continue to maintain the properties in good fashion and provide the incomes that so many of our clients use as retirement income.

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