

To Whom It May Concern:

It has come to my attention that with the current impact of the COVID-19 crisis, our Governor has issued an order allowing renters to not pay their rent for at least 90 days giving us landlords no recourse. Please note that this disaster relief needs to be for both tenants and landlords like myself. Like many of our tenants out there, us landlords have also been impacted by this COVID-19 crisis. Many of us have jobs that have been temporarily suspended due to the crisis. We too have families and bills to pay. Many of us having mortgages on the properties we are renting out in addition to mortgages on our primary homes. Some landlords rely solely on the income they receive from their rentals as their means for main source of income for food, medicine and utilities. In addition, as landlords we are required to keep up on the maintenance of our rentals. If we don't have the money to pay for maintenance/repairs due to this crisis, we may face punitive damage awards for failing to maintain the property. Where is this fair to us property owners/landlords? What are our rights during this time?

While many people have been temporarily suspended from working, many people are working from home, or have resources available to help them during this time. There needs to be some sort of needs tests for our tenants 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 their households do not meet their needs for food, shelter and utilities. When you gather this data, it provides information to the state regarding those communities that are most impacted. It would also help plan for future unexpected crisis that will no doubt come our way.

The issues I mentioned above along with many others will deeply impact housing providers throughout our state and nation. This can lead to devastating impacts to us rental owners and the people we house. I urge you to please consider the unintended consequences of your decisions now and in the coming days and find a middle ground that takes care of not only the renters but us property owners as well.

Thank you,

Arthur Welborn