

California Legislature

March 13, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Governor Newsom and Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye,

As California grapples with responding to the outbreak of COVID-19, among the many things that must be addressed is the exacerbating effects on our ongoing housing crisis. As this public health emergency escalates, California's 17 million renters are at great risk of hardship both from the effects of the virus itself and efforts to control and mitigate its spread. The Legislature and this Administration have made substantial progress in protecting tenants, but the problems presented by this virus would circumvent much of that and exacerbate homelessness in a direct way. We ask that you act decisively to protect tenants who are already vulnerable due to our ongoing affordable housing crisis from the additional threat presented by the virus.

California renters struggling with poverty, including over 300,000 households receiving rental assistance, are already suffering from tremendous housing instability, but this crisis and the necessary crisis response places them at even greater risk. For example, low-income residents are most likely to be employed in service industry, gig economy, and hourly jobs, making them especially susceptible to losing income and losing their jobs as a result COVID-19. Workers at our ports and airports have already experienced severe impacts to their employment, and as the prospect of school closures increases, so does the likelihood that parents with children will be forced to choose between missing work and leaving their kids unattended. This could lead directly to the displacement of our most vulnerable community members. It is critical that we protect them from potential negative outcomes while this public health emergency is ongoing.

Government intervention is necessary not only to combat the housing crisis, but also to keep people housed to protect public health. While we should always be working to improve public policies to protect low-income residents from displacement, it is especially critical that we do what we can to avoid increased homelessness and enable community members to protect themselves during an unprecedented public health crisis. An increase in evictions, terminations of housing assistance, foreclosures, and related negative actions will affect the ability of community members to maintain good hygiene and take the basic measures that we have all been advised to take in order to protect ourselves and our communities.

It is the responsibility of every branch of our state government to protect the public during this emergency and take the necessary action to eliminate or reduce its expected negative consequences. Recognizing this responsibility, we call on you to enact the following statewide policies in response to the ongoing epidemic. These policies should remain in effect for a minimum of 45 days, and they should continue so long as an emergency proclamation related to the virus is in effect:

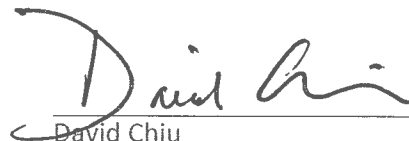
- A stay on all pending unlawful detainer actions in the Superior Courts.
- A moratorium on new unlawful detainer filings in the courts and on entry of default.
- A moratorium on the issuance of writs of execution.
- A moratorium on the execution of writs of possession.
- A moratorium on foreclosures.
- A moratorium on the issuance of eviction notices, regardless of the basis for the eviction.
- A moratorium on utility shutoffs
- A postponement of all housing authority hearings, adverse actions against housing assistance recipients, and meetings for individuals that are not related to the admission of new participants or otherwise related to giving access to housing or housing assistance to participants. This should include an extension of deadlines for participants to comply with requirements to deliver documents or records to the housing authority related to their eligibility for programs.

These policies should continue to allow for the appropriate removal of persons subject to protective orders, temporary restraining orders, and/or permanent restraining order based on, for example, domestic violence or elder or dependent abuse. In addition to these policies, once the current state of emergency is lifted and unlawful detainer proceedings resume, we encourage the Courts going forward to exercise the discretion and equitable powers granted to them to take into account hardships created by the COVID-19 outbreak, such as motions for relief from forfeiture under Code of Civil Procedure Section 1179 to relieve litigants from forfeiture in appropriate cases. Unprecedented public health crises call for unprecedented responses, and the government's emergency powers on this front are expansive.

Sincerely,



Richard Bloom
Assemblymember, 50th District



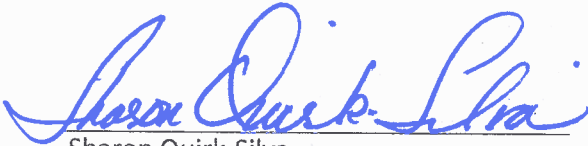
David Chiu
Assemblymember, 17th District



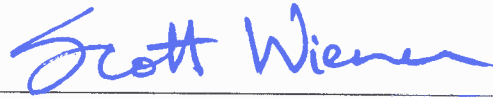
Rob Bonta
Assemblymember, 18th District



Mark Stone
Assemblymember, 29th District



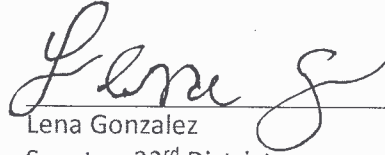
Sharon Quirk-Silva
Assemblymember, 65th District



Scott Wiener
Senator, 11th District



Buffy Wicks
Assemblymember, 15th District



Lena Gonzalez
Senator, 33rd District

Cc: Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins
Katie Kolitsos, Speakers Office
Stephanie Park, Pro Tempore Office
Cory Jaspersen, Judicial Council of California
Martin Hoshino, Judicial Council of California