April 2, 2020

ATTN: David Postman, Kathryn Leathers, John Flanagan, Jim Baumgart, Amber Leaders

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

RE: Please extend the eviction moratorium and address key gaps

Dear Governor Inslee:

Thank you for your leadership during this crisis and for your focus on homelessness and affordable housing this year. We appreciate the initial moratorium on evictions to ensure that workers and their families are not pushed into homelessness. The inclusion of both evictions for nonpayment and evictions after expiration of twenty-day no-cause notices was very appreciated. We are writing to request that you both extend and expand the eviction moratorium to ensure people do not lose housing and are not buried in debt once the crisis passes.

Please consider the following:

1. **Prohibit fees:**
   A prohibition on fees is critical because the state does not cap fees and we are getting reports from around the state that landlords are not only charging fees, but also using fees to gouge renters during this time. This includes late fees, service fees and process fees for paying rent. These fees can often accrue to total more than rent itself which will significantly diminish the ability for tenants to catch up once they begin to collect unemployment or other public benefits. Late fees also significantly threaten to collapse the ability of our state and local governments’ limited rental assistance funds to pay arrears and keep people housed. Several cities throughout the state have banned late fees, including: Seattle, Spokane, Everett, Auburn, Issaquah, and Burien. Several other cities like Federal Way are also in the process of banning late fees. But all tenants need this protection and a piecemeal approach makes it harder for landlords and tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities.

2. **Apply the moratorium to fixed term leases to ensure that tenants are not forced to move during the COVID-19 crisis:**
   It is difficult for tenants to relocate right now because many leasing offices are closed and the stay-at-home order discourages tenants from leaving their homes to look for new places to live. Most tenant households are not in a financial situation to afford to move either. But because Washington does not have good-cause eviction protections, landlords can refuse to renew a lease for no-cause, easily allowing them to bypass the moratorium unless this is explicitly covered, as it is in several cities like Seattle, Spokane,
Kenmore, and others.

3. **Apply the moratorium to existing stipulations and no-cause termination notices that were issued just prior to the original moratorium:**

Vulnerable tenants across the state are party to on-going stipulations - which are agreements between the tenant and the landlord that require certain actions in order for the tenant to not be evicted. The original moratorium did not clearly prohibit evictions of tenants who allegedly have violated the terms of the stipulation. Common stipulation terms include periodic back payments or behavior changes to address minor but ongoing lease violations.

Further, many tenants had already received twenty-day no-cause terminations prior to the original moratorium and some landlords are attempting to enforce them. This clearly violates the spirit of your moratorium and clarification is needed to ensure that enforcement of any no-cause termination notice is halted throughout the time period of the moratorium.

4. **Apply the moratorium to manufactured housing tenants who rent the land that their homes are on:**

These homeowners are also vulnerable to eviction and are oftentimes living on fixed incomes. They are at high risk of losing their manufactured home if evicted, in addition to experiencing homelessness. Many people living in these parks are working class families of color, many of whom have lost their jobs or have had their income reduced due to this crisis.

5. **Narrow the language in the original moratorium which allowed landlords to evict for health and safety threats:**

Please include explicit language that tenants may not be evicted as a “safety threat” for having contracted COVID-19, and also narrow the original language further to clarify that only tenants who are posing a significant and immediate threat to others can be evicted. The original language has allowed 10-day notices and evictions for minor compliance issues to move forward (such as having an unregistered pet or having family members staying with the renter household temporarily).

6. **Temporarily freeze rent increases:**

We are getting reports that landlords are sending out rent increase notices even during this pandemic. Since tenants cannot even find new places to live, they are facing large rent increases without any recourse. Even before this crisis, many renters lived paycheck to paycheck because of high housing costs. At a time with skyrocketing unemployment that is disproportionately impacting renters, any reprieve on rent will make it more likely people can get back on their feet when this crisis is over. In addition, prohibiting rent increases will reduce the cost to rental assistance programs.
Again, thank you for issuing the original moratorium and including evictions for nonpayment of rent and no-cause termination notices. Please extend it and include the above clarifications. We also know that rental assistance will be needed to help tenants address the arrears once the moratorium is lifted. There will be some tenants who will not be subject to unemployment insurance or other federal benefits who will need state assistance. This includes, but is not limited to, many immigrant renters and their families. We urge the state to actively consider how Washington can fill the gaps that the federal investments will not cover. We also urge the state to do more to address the looming foreclosure crisis to help keep people in their homes.

Sincerely,

350 Seattle
4 Tomorrow
Alliance of People with disAbilities
Ally Community Development
Arts Corps
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Washington
Attain Housing
Benefits Law Center
Benton County Dept. of Human Services
Bishop of the Diocese Of Olympia
Byrd Barr Place
Campion Advocacy Fund
Catholic Community Services/Catholic Housing Services of Western WA
Chaplains on the Harbor
Chelan Valley Hope
Chief Seattle Club
Church Council of Greater Seattle
Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence
Peer Navigator Training Program, Spokane
Cocoon House
Columbia Legal Services
Commonwealth Agency
Community Youth Services
Council for the Homeless
Eastside Interfaith Gathering, EIG
Elizabeth Gregory Home
Enterprise Community Partners
Entre Hermanos
Equity in Education Coalition
Evergreen Treatment Services
Fair Work Center
Faith Action Network
Family Support Center of South Sound
Frontier Behavioral Health
Gay City: Seattle's LGBTQ Center
Green Canopy Inc.
Health Equity Circle
Health Equity Circle - Spokane Chapter
Hepatitis Education Project
Homeless Network of Yakima County
Homes First
Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County
Imagine Housing
Indivisible Tacoma
Jefferson County Farmers Markets
King County Bar Association, Housing Justice Project
Kitsap Community Resources
Kitsap Legal Services
Kitsap Rescue Mission
Lake Washington UMC Safe Parking
League of Women Voters of WA
Legal Counsel for Youth and Children
Lifelong AIDS Alliance
LifeWire
Lopez Community Land Trust
Lydia Place
MDC - Metropolitan Development Council
Mother Africa
Neighborhood House
Next Step Housing
Northwest Harvest
Okanogan County Community Action Council
OlyCAP
OneAmerica
Opportunity Council
Partners for Rural Washington
Physicians for a National Health Program - Western Washington Chapter
Pizza Klatch
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Project Access Northwest
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement of Action Education Fund
REACH
Real Change
RESIDENT ACTION PROJECT
ROOTS Young Adult Shelter
Sage Conservation
San Juan Community Home Trust
Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness
SEIU 775
SEIU 925
Shared Housing Services
Snoqualmie Valley Shelter Services
Somali Youth and Family Club
Sound Alliance
Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium
Tacoma Democratic Socialists of America
TeamChild
Tenants Union of Washington State
The American Civil Liberties Union of Washington
The Arc of King County
The Mockingbird Society
The People’s Harm Reduction alliance
The Sophia Way
The STAR Project
Third Place Design Co-operative
Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services
Transitions
UFCW Local 21
UNITE HERE Local 8
United Way of King County
United Ways of the Pacific Northwest
WA Federation of State Employees/AFSCME Council 28
Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy
Washington Community Action Network
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance
Washington Progress Alliance
Washington State Budget & Policy Center
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Washington Student Association
Working Washington
YouthCare
YWCA Pierce County