

March 30, 2020

Contra Costa Board of Supervisors
County Administrator David Twa

RE: Urgent Action to Preserve Housing Stability and Protect Tenants and Small Businesses Affected by COVID-19

Dear Chair Andersen and Supervisors Burgis, Gioia, Glover, and Mitchoff,

The COVID-19 crisis continues to accelerate, and residents have been ordered to stay at home. In Contra Costa, the resulting economic impacts are devastating to local small businesses and workers who abruptly lost some or all of their income. Many businesses have closed, and thousands of residents -- especially those working low-wage jobs in the retail and service sectors -- have been laid off or had their hours greatly reduced. **With rent payments for many residents due on April 1, this coming week is a critical time for local leadership and action.**

Responding to the COVID-19 crisis is about more than addressing residents's medical needs. Helping residents maintain stable housing is a vital strategy to reducing the immediate and long-term health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

Therefore, a broad alliance of labor and community groups call on the Board of Supervisors to take the following actions to support all of Contra Costa's workers and families:

- Enact a **county-wide emergency moratorium on all evictions for renters and small businesses** for at least the next 60 days or for the duration of this crisis (to apply to all renters regardless of the type of home or business, type of work, or immigration status).
- Enact an **immediate moratorium on all rent increases** across the county for renters and small businesses for at least the next 60 days or for the duration of this crisis.
- Establish an **emergency fund to provide up to three months of rental assistance** for individuals who are experiencing economic distress.

The Governor's recent Executive Order (N-37-20) created the false and dangerous impression that he has already enacted a statewide eviction moratorium, and that therefore no action at the local level is needed. This is not correct. His Executive Order did not create a moratorium on evictions. The Order still permits landlords to file and serve evictions -- even today -- and does little to nothing to protect tenants. It simply kicks the can down the road by eight weeks. The stay at home order is expected to remain in place for all or most of that period, which means that many tenants' economic situation will become much *worse*, not better, by the end of May. Thus all the Governor's Order does is delay the inevitable, which is that **thousands of people in Contra Costa remain at serious risk of losing their homes during the worse public health crisis our nation has ever seen.**

This is why we also find the Contra Costa Sheriff's pledge to "stay all evictions countywide through May 31" to be a wholly inadequate response in this crisis. While we appreciate the intent, this stay does nothing to put protections into place for renters who are unable to pay their rent during this

crisis and who can then be served with an eviction notice as soon as the courts reopen or the Sheriff changes his mind. It is worth noting that the Sheriff's pledge has not been codified into an ordinance or other official policy, which goes against good practice and common sense in creating transparent public policy.

It is for this reason that the organizations and individuals listed below call on your leadership, during this time of unprecedented public crisis, to **enact an emergency eviction and rent moratorium ordinance for Contra Costa County residents and small businesses**. A well-designed ordinance will help residents, families and business struggling to pay rent by offering:

- Clear instructions to landlords not to ISSUE or carry out any evictions
- A prohibition on late fees
- A grace period of at least 120 days to repay rent after the crisis ends
- A freeze on rent increases during the crisis

Four Bay Area counties have already taken this important action to protect local tenants: San Mateo, Santa Clara, Marin and San Francisco. Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-28-20, issued on March 16, actually encouraged local jurisdictions to take swift action for eviction prevention and removed several barriers to doing so. We praise the leadership of two cities in Contra Costa -- Richmond and Concord -- that have also stepped up to enact eviction moratoria in this time.

But **countywide action is needed immediately as well**. All residents of this county deserve these protections. They deserve the sense of relief and well-being that will arise from no longer fearing that they may lose their homes if they fall behind on rent due to job loss, reduced hours, or becoming infected with the virus. And we are all better off if small business owners do not lose their commercial space, and cost their employees their livelihoods, during the growing economic crisis created by this public health emergency.

Moreover, unless County leadership steps up to do your part to stabilize people's housing and keep residents from being displaced or becoming homeless, the potential for this virus further spreading and this health crisis being protracted is all but guaranteed. **Thus, we urge you to agendize a county-wide eviction and rent hike moratorium at the earliest possible date.**

We all know that our communities and neighborhoods become stronger, safer and healthier when we join together to enact proven solutions to ensure our communities' well-being.

We need your bold and compassionate leadership in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

1. Central County Regional Group
2. Contra Costa Central Labor Council
3. Contra Costa Building Trades Council
4. Contra Costa Budget Justice Coalition

5. Contra Costa Defenders Association
6. Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance
7. Contra Costa County Local Planning Advisory Council for Early Care and Education (LPC)
8. Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) - Contra Costa Chapter
9. Antioch Education Association
10. Bay Area Community Resources
11. Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative
12. Boilermakers Local 549
13. Budget Justice Coalition
14. Communities for a Better Environment
15. East County Regional Group
16. East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO)
17. East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE)
18. East County Community Alliance
19. Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa
20. Faith Alliance for a Moral Economy
21. Faith in Action East Bay
22. Family Economic Security Partnership
23. First 5 Contra Costa
24. Healthy & Active Before 5
25. Healthy Richmond
26. Human Services Alliance of Contra Costa
27. IBEW 302
28. IBEW 1245
29. IFPTE 21
30. IFPTE ESC 20
31. Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
32. Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay
33. Lift Up Contra Costa
34. Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa

35. Monument Impact
36. Mt. Diablo Education Association
37. Multifaith Immigration Coalition for Action (MICA)
38. Multifaith Action Coalition (MFAC)
39. Neto
40. Nonprofit Housing of Northern California (NPH)
41. Organizing For Action - Contra Costa
42. Opportunity Junction
43. Public Advocates
44. Rainbow Community Center
45. RCF Connects
46. Rubicon Programs
47. Ryse Youth Center
48. Safe Return Project
49. SEIU 1021
50. SEIU UHW
51. SparkPoint Contra Costa
52. Sprinkler Fitters Local 483
53. Teamsters 856
54. Tenants Together
55. UA 159
56. UFCW 5
57. United Way Bay Area
58. Urban Habitat
59. Uplift Family Services (formerly EMQ FamiliesFirst)
60. Village Community Resource Center
61. We Care Services for Children
62. West County Firstm 5 Center
63. West County Regional Group
64. Winter Nights Family Shelter