

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
House of Representatives
H-232, the Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
House of Representatives
H-222, the Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer and Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned national associations that represent for-profit and non-profit owners, developers, managers, housing cooperatives and housing agencies involved in providing affordable rental and cooperative housing to millions of American families urge you to take meaningful action now to protect the housing stability of millions of American families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The relief provided by the CARES Act was successful in helping Americans meet their housing needs, and we strongly urge Congress to support critically needed policies in the next COVID-19 bill to help keep people in their homes, while preventing fundamental damage to the rental housing industry.

As you know, over 54 million Americans have filed initial claims for unemployment since the beginning of the pandemic, and many are struggling to pay everyday expenses – chief among them, rent. As the pandemic drags on, the country's 109 million renters are expected to be disproportionately impacted because they are more likely to work in industries hardest hit by layoffs. In fact, the Census Bureau estimates that 46 percent of all renters are currently unemployed. Moreover, as the crisis continues and renters' savings are depleted, these ongoing challenges will interfere with renters' ability to pay their rent: Nearly 24 million people have little or no confidence in their ability to pay next month's rent, according to the Census Bureau.

If residents are unable to pay their rent, housing providers will also be unable to meet their mortgage obligations, fund their payrolls and pay their property taxes to state and local governments that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. That, in turn, is likely to catalyze a chain of events with potentially devastating financial and economic effects.

As you work towards a final relief package, we urge you to consider two items of great importance to the housing sector:

- **Financial Assistance/Emergency Rental Assistance** – Renters impacted by the pandemic need federal rental assistance to continue meeting their financial obligations. Federal and state unemployment assistance benefits have helped many renters make their rent, but without that supplemental assistance or another financial lifeline, many will not be able to meet their financial obligations. An extension of now-expired federal unemployment benefits, in conjunction with direct rental assistance for those not able to access those funds, is necessary to protect the housing stability of millions of Americans.

A variety of rental assistance proposals have emerged, and our groups urge policymakers to ensure whichever delivery mechanism(s) is chosen, swiftly distributes funding at the property-level, while also protecting struggling renters at all income levels and geographic regions including urban, suburban and rural areas throughout the country.

- **Eviction Moratorium** – The CARES Act included a temporary eviction moratorium that responded to the immediate uncertainties and difficulties at the outset of this crisis. Today, we better understand the scope of the housing challenges we face and must establish long-term solutions to avert serious damage to America's renters and housing providers. An extended eviction moratorium is not the answer to the financial distress that renters may experience and could in fact cause considerable injury to the housing sector as a whole.

A protracted eviction moratorium is unsustainable and does nothing to address a renter's underlying financial distress or risk of housing insecurity. In contrast, the creation of a robust rental assistance program, as outlined above, or other financial aid would provide real support for American families, while also helping preserve critical stability for property owners. An eviction moratorium without a federal funding commitment creates conditions for a systemic market failure where lost, and likely irrecoverable, rent payments jeopardize property owners' ability to maintain critical property operations and ensure the ongoing financial viability of the property. These efforts put the stability of the entire rental housing sector in danger and further complicate our shared efforts to address long-standing housing affordability challenges across the nation.

As you continue your work to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that continued direct financial support and emergency rental assistance provide solutions for residents and housing providers alike and are necessary to help those with financial hardships, without undermining the stability of the housing market and the financial health of our communities. By taking meaningful action now, Congress can keep roofs over families' heads, save small businesses and pull the country back from an emerging housing crisis.

Sincerely,

CCIM Institute
Council for Affordable and Rural Housing
Institute of Real Estate Management
Manufactured Housing Institute
National Affordable Housing Management Association
National Apartment Association
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Housing Cooperatives
National Association of REALTORS
National Leased Housing Association
National Multifamily Housing Council
Mortgage Bankers Association

cc: Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin
White House Coronavirus Task Force