



May 5, 2021

The Honorable Larry Hogan  
Governor of Maryland  
State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

We write to respectfully urge you to institute a targeted 90–120-day moratorium on all failure to pay rent and tenant holding over eviction hearings in Maryland. On April 5, the courts began hearing nonpayment of rent cases; in many counties they are using “rocket dockets” to work through case backlogs. Advocates and community partners are seeing many of these cases result in evictions despite the state and federal orders currently in place. At the same time, the state has received over \$400 million in emergency rental assistance funds, and we anticipate an additional similar allocation from the American Rescue Plan. The State and counties are still working to stand up and launch programs to distribute these funds to many of the very households facing eviction. A temporary, targeted moratorium on eviction hearings would provide time for rental assistance programs to go into effect and serve their intended purpose: to prevent mass eviction and displacement.

We commend you for the action you took last year, instituting an order allowing tenants to present COVID-related loss of income as an affirmative defense to eviction judgements. Especially while the courts remained closed due to health and safety concerns, this order kept many people in their homes. Now that courts are reopened, however, the State and CDC orders are not stopping many evictions because they are not all-encompassing and require renters to attend court hearings and provide documentation of income loss. In this challenging time, many people fail to attend hearings for a number of reasons, including COVID-related health concerns and inability to take time off of work. We need a temporary, targeted moratorium on eviction hearings to allow the State and counties time to launch rental assistance programs, process applications, and distribute funds.

Such a moratorium would benefit tenants and landlords across the state. It would provide renter households time to apply for assistance and resolve their rent arrears, eliminating the threat of eviction. For landlords, a moratorium on hearings would reduce the time-consuming and costly process of evicting tenants and re-leasing units; once applications are processed and funds are distributed, landlords will receive the rent due to them.

We have the funding to keep people in their homes, but the State and counties need time to ensure that it reaches our communities. Governor Hogan, we urge you to take the critical step of declaring a targeted 90–120-day moratorium on failure to pay rent and tenant holding over eviction hearings in

order to provide that time. It is unconscionable for people to be evicted and displaced when, but for a few weeks, they would have the assistance they need to stabilize their housing. Thank you for your consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,



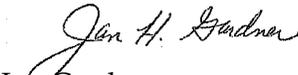
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Anne Arundel County



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