April 5, 2020

The Honorable Governor Charles Baker
Senate President Karen Spilka
Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo
Members of the Massachusetts Legislature

We call upon the Governor, Senate, and House to pass a clear moratorium on evictions and foreclosures NOW and support renters and homeowners across the Commonwealth during this global COVID-19 pandemic.

As the first day of the month comes and goes, hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts renters and homeowners agonize over whether they will be able to make rent and mortgage payments or be forced to face eviction and homelessness, at a time when they have been told to stay home. We urge the Governor and the Legislature to take meaningful and swift action to protect the lives of Massachusetts renters and homeowners during this unprecedented public health crisis by passing a strong eviction moratorium.

At its core, a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures is an emergency public health protection measure, one that must match the extraordinary restrictions already placed on businesses, schools, and workers across the globe. Governor Baker has reiterated the need to stay home and maintain social distancing, the best protection against preventing COVID-19 infections. The Governor and public health officials have warned that the worst is yet to come in Massachusetts. Keeping people at home is a matter of life and death.

In order to meet these critical public health goals it is imperative that evictions be paused from start to finish. Placing a clear and temporary freeze on all aspects of eviction is the only way to ensure that people stay in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. There are several key principles we believe must be included in any eviction moratorium legislation for it to meet its public health goals:

1. The moratorium must apply to all stages of eviction. This must explicitly include a temporary ban on:
   a. sending a Notice to Quit or termination of tenancy letter;
   b. filing (including electronically) a new eviction case;
   c. serving a summons and complaint on a tenant;
   d. scheduling non-emergency court hearings or events;
   e. entering judgments for possession (whether by default, agreement, or other);
   f. levying on executions to forcibly remove tenants.

2. The moratorium should contain only very narrow exceptions that allow certain evictions to move forward. In the event of a dire emergency, law enforcement agencies are still available and landlords and tenants can file emergency actions under the trial court’s current standing orders.
3. The moratorium must remain in place at least until the Governor’s emergency declaration is rescinded plus a reasonable recovery period thereafter.

The House has now passed a moratorium bill, H.4615. That bill addresses many of the key principles noted above, and is a strong foundation for enacting a pause on evictions. That temporary pause must apply to the first eviction notice sent to a tenant through the time a tenant could be forcibly removed from her home by a sheriff. H.4615 can and should be further improved, mainly by ensuring that any exceptions to the moratorium are narrow and reflect only the most serious emergencies, and also by simplifying the language that pauses late fees. But it is a good starting place and we urge that, with these improvements, it be enacted as soon as possible.

Since March 16, 2020, when the courts began instituting closures and reduced services, over 480 new eviction cases have been filed in Massachusetts Housing Courts. This number represents hundreds of families possibly endangering themselves, their friends and families, and the public as they may move or become homeless.

We, and our broad network of organizations, stand ready to work together to consider next-phase issues with the time and consideration they deserve, including how to provide mortgage and rent relief, how federal legislation will affect Massachusetts, and other questions that will arise as we anticipate the end of the emergency. However, in order to protect lives today we urge the Governor and the Legislature to act decisively to pass an eviction and foreclosure moratorium that will keep our citizens and community safe.

We appreciate the efforts that Senate President Spilka, Speaker DeLeo, and other members and their staff have made to listen to and consider our proposals. We thank you for your leadership during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

350 Massachusetts

About Fresh

ACE

Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.

Action, Inc.

American Federation of Teachers MA

Allston Brighton CDC
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts
American Friends Service Committee
Arise for Social Justice
Asian American Resource Workshop
Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK)
Berkshire Interfaith Organizing
Berkshire United Way
Bethel AME Church
Boilermakers Local Union 29
Boston Asian Youth Essential Service
Boston City Council:
  • Councilor Michelle Wu, At-Large
  • Councilor Julia Mejia, At-Large
  • Councilor Lydia Edwards, District 1
  • Councilor Ed Flynn, District 2
  • Councilor Andrea Campbell, District 4
  • Councilor Ricardo Arroyo, District 5
  • Councilor Kim Janey, District 7
  • Councilor Kenzie Bok, District 8
Boston Release Network
Boston Tenant Coalition
Boston University--School of Social Work
Brazilian Worker Center
Bricklayers and Allied Crafts Local Union 3
Brockton Interfaith Community
Building Wreckers Local Union 1421
Cape and Islands Commission on the Status of Women
Catalyst Consulting
Central West Justice Center
Chelsea Collaborative
Children's HealthWatch
Chinatown Community Land Trust
Chinese Progressive Association
Christian Community Church & The Shalom Neighborhood Center
City Life/Vida Urbana
City of Northampton, Mass.:

- David J. Narkewicz, Mayor

Clean Plate Law
Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester
Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.
Community Action Pioneer Valley
Community Action, Inc.
Community Care Cooperative
Conservation Law Foundation
Construct Inc.
De Novo Center for Justice and Healing
Dorchester Youth Collaborative
DOVE, Inc.
Elevator Constructors Local Union 4
Essex County Community Organization
Essex County Bar Association--Lawyer for a Day Program
FamilyAid Boston
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
Greater Boston Interfaith Organization
Greater Boston Legal Services
Greater New Bedford Community Health Center
GreenRoots
Groundwork Lawrence
Groundwork Southcoast
Grow Food Northampton
Hadley Council on Aging
Hampden County Career Center, Inc.; dba: MassHireHolyoke
Harvard Legal Aid Bureau
Health Leads
Health Resources in Action
Heat and Frost Insulators Local Union 6
Heisler, Feldman & McCormick, P.C.
Highlands Coalition
Holyoke Public Schools
Holyoke Veterans’ Services
Homes for All Massachusetts
HomeStart, Inc.
Housing Corporation of Arlington
Housing Families
Hyde Square Task Force
I Have A Future
IBEW Local 103
Indivisible Northampton
Indivisible Williamsburg
Iron Workers Local Union 7
IUE-CWA Local 201
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston
Joint Coalition On Health
Justice at Work
Justice Center of Southeast MA
Justice Resource Institute
Laborers Local Union 22
Laborers’ Local Union 151
Laborers’ Local Union 223
Lawrence CommunityWorks
LDB Peace Institute
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School
LEO Inc.
Lynn United for Change
MA Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC)
Manijeh Berenji MD Consulting
Margolis Apartments Resident Council
Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants
MassCOSH
Mass NOW
Mass Policy and Organizing Center
Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance
Massachusetts AFL-CIO
Massachusetts Alliance for Sober Housing
Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers
Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center
Massachusetts Building Trades Council
Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Communities Action Network
Massachusetts Fair Housing Center
Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Massachusetts Jobs With Justice
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Massachusetts Nurses Association
Massachusetts Public Health Association
Massachusetts Senior Action Council
Massachusetts Teachers Association
Massachusetts Voter Table
Massachusetts Workforce Association
MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, Inc.
Matthew Aronson Consulting
Meadowview Tenants Association
Metro Housing!Boston
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MetroWest Legal Services
Metrowest Worker Center - Casa
Mill City Grows
MissionSAFE
MLPB (f/k/a Medical Legal Partnership | Boston)
Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR)
More Than Words
Multicultural BRIDGE
Murphy & Rudolf, LLP
National Lawyers Guild, Massachusetts Chapter
Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts
Neighbors United for a Better East Boston (NUBE)
New England Jewish Labor Committee
New England Learning Center for Women In Transition (NELCWIT)
North Shore Juneteenth Association Inc.
Northampton City Council:
  - Alex Jarrett, Ward 5
  - Rachel Maiore, Ward 7
Northern Berkshire United Way
NuLawLab
One Family
Operating Engineers Local Union 4
Our Revolution Medford
Out Now
Painters and Allied Trades District Council 35
Paradise Action Huddle
Partners HealthCare
PHENOM (Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts)
Pioneer Valley Project
Pioneer Valley Workers Center
Pipefitters Local Union 537
Plasterers and Cement Masons Local Union 534
Plumbers and Gasfitters Local Union 12
Plymouth Redevelopment Authority
Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts
Progressive Massachusetts
Prophetic Resistance, Boston
Pueblo Unido de East Boston para Liberar y Organizar (PUEBLO) Coalition
Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc. (QCAP)
REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, Inc.
Reclaim Roxbury
Renters Rising
Right to the City Boston
Roofers and Waterproofers Local Union 33
Rosie's Place
SafeMedford
Saheli Inc
SEIU Local 509
ServiceNet, Inc. (Hampshire, Franklin, Berkshire Counties)
Sheet Metal Workers Local Union 17
Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter
Somerville Office of Housing Stability
Springfield City Council:
  ● Councilor Adam Gomez, Vice President
  ● Councilor Tracye Whitfield
  ● Councilor Melvin Edwards
  ● Councilor Jesse L. Lederman
  ● Councilor Justin Hurst
Springfield Education Association
Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals
Springfield No One Leaves
Sprinkler Fitters Local Union 550
Square One
Stavros Center For Independent Living
Stop Bullying Coalition
Sunrise Easthampton
Sunrise Franklin County
Sunrise Hampden County
Sunrise Northampton
Tapestry Health
The Center For Teen Empowerment
The Real Cost of Prisons Project
The Resistance Center for Peace and Justice
The Three County Continuum of Care, Community Action Pioneer Valley
The Welcome Project
Town of Amherst:
  ● Paul Bockelman, Town Manager
Transition House
Tunnel Workers Local Union 88
Union of Minority Neighborhoods
Unitarian Universalist Mass Action
United Interfaith Action of Southeastern Massachusetts
United Way of Hampshire County
United Way of Pioneer Valley
Valley Community Development Corporation
Valley Opportunity Council - Holyoke, Chicopee
Vinfen
Washington Beech Fun Committee
Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness
Womanshelter/Companeras
Women Encouraging Empowerment Inc.

Worcester County Food Bank, Inc

Worcester Interfaith