

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