

June 15, 2020

Dear Gov. DeWine,

The coronavirus pandemic has really illustrated the intimate connection between stable housing and good health. We are gravely concerned that the economic recession will sever this connection for many Ohioans who are struggling to maintain their housing. **We call on your administration to deploy at least \$100 million from Ohio's federal Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) for emergency rental assistance for unemployed tenants who are unable to pay their rent.**

Nearly 1.3 million Ohioans have filed jobless claims in the past 11 weeks. Layoffs are disproportionately impacting lower income workers who rent their homes. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that more than 1.25 million Ohio renters have experienced income loss, including layoffs, pay cuts and furloughs. Local courts have resumed eviction hearings, and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation is set to expire next month. **The facts are clear: without immediate and decisive action, Ohio faces a tsunami of evictions. We must not exacerbate this public health crisis with a flood of Ohioans entering our local homeless shelters.**

Fortunately, the federal CARES Act has provided Ohio with resources to prevent a full-blown housing crisis if we act now, as other states have done. For example, Pennsylvania's new COVID Relief Mortgage and Rental Assistance Grant Program, which includes \$150 million federal CRF, provides a model for Ohio to provide emergency rental assistance.

We respectfully request the administration dedicate at least \$100 million in CRF to create an emergency rental assistance program to be administered by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency and/or the Ohio Development Services Agency. These state agencies would partner with local nonprofits that have a strong track record of distributing housing assistance responsibly. Tenants would apply through these organizations for assistance that would be paid directly to their landlords. Given the breadth of demand and limited resources, this initiative should target tenants with the lowest incomes as assessed at the moment of application.

Emergency rental assistance is critical for stabilizing Ohio's rental housing market. Ohioans need help now to pay the rent, and landlords need rental income to pay their employees, mortgages, taxes and property maintenance costs.

Funding from the CRF must be spent by the end of 2020. In order to ensure the stability of tenants and property owners into next year, we further ask that the remaining \$37 million of Ohio's remaining supplemental Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CARES Act) funding be earmarked for emergency rental assistance for rural, suburban, and urban communities.

We are hopeful that Congress will enact legislation to provide significantly more funding for emergency rental assistance. However, even if this proposal is enacted soon, it will take months before those resources flow to Ohio's tenants and rental property owners.

We implore you to quickly invest a portion of our state's federal emergency relief funds to keep Ohio's tenants and rental market healthy during this public health crisis.

Sincerely,