



July 9, 2020

Honorable Douglas Ducey
Office of the Governor, State of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Governor Ducey,

It is with great urgency and concern that we write to you today on behalf of Pima County and statewide residents facing evictions and landlord/property owners in need of financial payment. There is a **critical need to either:**

- Enlist a new and more comprehensive Executive Order with additional protection for tenants and landlords (please see recommendations below)
- Or, extend the Eviction Moratorium set to expire on July 23, 2020 for inability to meet residential rent obligations due to COVID-19 related issues

Executive action is critical to ensure that hundreds of thousands¹ of Arizona residents are not left homeless during the hottest months of the year, exposing them to greater risk of both contracting and spreading COVID-19 as the pandemic crisis escalates in our state. In tandem, crafting an order that addresses the fear and anxiety of property owners ensures that both constituencies are heard and protected, preventing a likely statewide catastrophe.

We come to you as a coalition of nonprofit agencies serving Southern Arizonans ranging in service from affordable housing property managers and owners to direct mental health service providers. Our collective concern is for our varying client bases and the devastating repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic which will continue to disproportionately impact our most underserved and most vulnerable populations. We foresee the potential impacts of this terrifying eviction cliff looming. We encourage and recommend executive action and hope to provide you with some valuable recommendations that will serve both landlord/property owners and tenants. Without direct government action, Arizona's most marginalized communities are at risk for an enormous fall and the cascading impacts will reverberate throughout our communities, ultimately damaging economic recovery. As representatives from social service, we hope to encourage thoughtful action to mitigate the potential devastating impact of the expiration of the Eviction Moratorium without next steps or an extension in place.

Our agencies are advocating for the following approaches to be included in a new Executive Order protecting both tenants and property owners:

- Issue guidelines in relation to the CARES Act² which include both foreclosure forbearance (for landlords/property owners) and no eviction filings, late fees or penalties for non-payment (for tenants) **related to inability to pay due to COVID-19**

- Include penalties for violating the eviction moratorium guidelines
- Direct additional stimulus funding toward rent relief or housing vouchers, prioritizing and expediting rent relief, as well as, eliminating many of the barriers to eligibility so people can access the money needed to pay property owners.
- Additional recommendations include elements of the Eviction Policy Scorecard³
 - No reporting to credit bureaus (e.g., Connecticut)
 - Sealing eviction records (e.g., Nevada)
 - No rent raises
 - No utility disconnection and utility reconnection

As representatives from social service agencies and affordable housing property managers and owners, our group has a unique perspective and understanding of these issues. We are advocating for security for both rental tenants and landlords/property owners alike. We understand that both parties are struggling and living in fear of what is to come. Since the onset of COVID-19 and the initial shut down of our state, to the now emergency we are in locally, there has not been enough time or viable systems to distribute funding and find solutions to this problem. Numbers and needs have quite frankly been too high to navigate with current systems and requirements, not to mention the need to mitigate health risks by closing brick and mortar buildings that typically process and assist with issues of this nature.

Local government and social service organizations desperately need more time to distribute state and national funding to landlords on behalf of tenants. Currently, Arizona has a backlog of over 8,000 rental assistance requests. Tenants have been waiting for months to receive information about support. Constables are going door to door trying to inform tenants on the verge of eviction of their rights under the CARES Act. Nothing is normal about this time in our state or nation's history. Bold action is necessary to protect our most at-risk Arizonans. As you acknowledge that many statewide businesses must re-close, we respectfully ask you to also acknowledge the implications of those closures and implore you to extend the Eviction moratorium to give those needing rental assistance additional time to secure it and to assure landlords that they will receive payment as soon as is feasible.

Some terrifying statistics for you to be acutely aware of:

- “From March 14 to April 9, there were 474,540 unemployment claims filed in Arizona. **More than 418,000 of those claims were made by people filing for unemployment for the first time in their lives.** And these filings are drastically increasing with each passing week. In the week ending April 4, **unemployment applications rose to 132,189, an increase of 48.6% from the previous week, and an increase of 2528.5% from the same week last year⁴.**”
- “This dramatic increase in job loss and unemployment will lead to a similar increase in the number of households [that] are at risk of missing rent payments, which could cascade into a national flood of evictions and forced homelessness.⁵”
- “Mass evictions would be a disaster. For both individuals and families, evictions result in severe harm; when they become widespread, **there are also significant consequences for entire communities and even the speed of economic recovery.** Between 19 and 23 Million are at risk of eviction by September with undocumented immigrants, low income renters and people of color most vulnerable.¹”
- It has been predicted that **577,733 renters will be at risk for eviction in Arizona** by Sept 30.¹

The time to act is now to assure renters and landlords alike that you understand this issue and are working to mitigate what could be a disastrous toll on our local communities. While we wait for federal support, Arizonans are counting on you to act. You have the power to review this issue and make lifesaving orders for the benefit of our state's public safety and economic security.

Sincerely,

Meghan Heddings, Executive Director, **Family Housing Resources**

Marguerite Harmon, Chief Executive Officer, **Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona**

Clint Mabie, Chief Executive Officer, **Community Foundation for Southern Arizona**

Danny Knee, Executive Director, **Community Investment Corporation**

Stacy Butler, Director, **Innovation for Justice Program University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law**

Tom McKinney, Chief Executive Officer, **Interfaith Community Services (ICS)**

Aaron Rippenkroeger, Executive Director, **International Rescue Committee- Arizona**

Graham Hoffman, President and CEO, **Jewish Community Foundation of Southern Arizona and Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona**

Katy Scoblink, Chief Operating Officer, **Old Pueblo Community Services**

Beth Morrison, Chief Executive Officer, **Our Family Services**

Peggy Hutchison, Chief Executive Officer, **Primavera Foundation**

Elizabeth Slater, Chief Executive Officer, **Youth On Their Own**

Ciara Garcia, Chief Executive Officer, **Social Venture Partners Tucson**

Michele Mirto, Executive Director/Attorney at Law, **Step Up to Justice**

Tony Penn, President and CEO, United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

Sources:

1: [The Aspen Institute "20 Million Renters Are at Risk of Eviction; Policy makers Must Act Now to Mitigate Widespread Hardship](#)

2: [The Nation Law Review "Foreclosure and Eviction Moratoriums Under the CARES Act"](#)

3: [Eviction Lab "COVID-19 Housing Policy Scorecard"](#)

4: [AZFamily.com "Unemployment numbers in Arizona show steep rise due to COVID-19 Crisis"](#)

5: [The Washington Post "Which states are doing a better job protecting renters from being evicted during the coronavirus pandemic:](#)