

**Organizational Sign-On Letter
To MA Congressional Delegation
Re: Support for National Eviction Moratorium
and \$100 Billion Emergency Rental Assistance Fund**

To: Massachusetts Congressional Delegation Members

Date: May 4, 2020

From: Massachusetts tenant, housing and community organizations

BY EMAIL

**RE: Making Housing Assistance a Top Priority for the Next COVID 19 Relief Package:
Support for \$111.5 Emergency Rental Assistance and National Eviction Moratorium**

Dear Massachusetts Delegation Members:

Thank you for your critical support for housing programs in the CARES Act. The \$12 billion in resources for affordable housing and people experiencing homelessness included in the Act will save lives and assist individuals and families across Massachusetts and the entire country. Massachusetts can expect to receive an estimated \$210 million to address urgent housing needs.

While helpful, this is not nearly enough. The undersigned Massachusetts tenant, housing and community organizations urge you to *advocate with Congressional leadership to ensure that \$111.5 billion in emergency assistance for low income renters and people experiencing homelessness, is included on the “short list” of priorities for the next COVID relief package*, as outlined below.

As you know, House Democrats included these proposals in HR 6379 on March 23, but they were not included in the CARES Act. The need for these funds has only increased since then, and will grow more dramatically when rents are due on May 1. *The Massachusetts Delegation plays a key leadership role in Congress. We need you to fight for these funds!*

According to [new research](#) released April 22 by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, *an estimated 35% of Massachusetts tenants are currently unable to pay \$410 million in rent payments for each month of the crisis, in the absence of government assistance.* After discounting for the one-time \$1,200 CARES Act stimulus and extra \$600/week unemployment payments, *renters will still be unable to pay \$164 million during the first month alone*, with shortfalls of \$250-300 million per month for each successive month. *Over the next four months, Massachusetts tenants will be unable to pay more than \$1.2 billion in rent.*

The crisis has exposed the fault lines of economic and racial injustice and housing insecurity entrenched in our state even before the COVID crisis, when 160,000 extremely low-income renters were paying more than 58% of their income on rent, disproportionately people of color. More than 18,000 Massachusetts households remain homeless, including 25% of whom are (or were until recently) workers. These numbers will soar starting May 1.

Many renters who have lost jobs and face displacement now are workers of color whose communities have already been horrifically ravaged by COVID. Besides threatening the lives of the people displaced during a pandemic, mass displacement and the inability to pay rent will also wreak havoc in rental markets and devastate city budgets reliant on property taxes.

Although Massachusetts has adopted the strongest Eviction Moratorium in the nation, tenants who are unable to pay will face a huge rent backlog and explosion of debt when the moratorium ends, as soon as July 31. Because Massachusetts homeowners will be able to forbear mortgage payments until the end of their mortgage, renters remain at the highest risk. *If the crisis continues for one year, low income Massachusetts renters would be unable to pay more than \$3.2 billion, far beyond what the state could otherwise provide* from its allocation of CARES Act funds for state/local assistance.

Congress must act now to provide substantial housing resources to prevent mass displacement and homelessness. We urge you to ask Congressional leaders to *prioritize these elements from HR 6379 in the next COVID Relief package:*

1) \$100 billion in Emergency Rental Assistance: Emergency rental assistance in the amount of \$100 billion is needed to prevent mass evictions and increased homelessness, as [documented](#) by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. When the moratoria end, renters will owe and be unable to pay the backlog of rent that is likely to accumulate, a particularly acute crisis in the Greater Boston area, where rents are among the highest in the nation. Emergency rental assistance can be provided through a combination of Emergency Solutions Grants, Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 515 Rural Rent Assistance, or the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP), which was used by past Administrations to address the short-term needs of renters.

2) Uniform Moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions: Housing stability will be crucial in the coming weeks and months, especially for low-income renters. Although Massachusetts tenants are now protected by state law, Congress should move to enact a uniform moratorium on *all* stages of the foreclosure and eviction process nationwide to address the current patchwork of moratoria at the federal, state, and local levels.

3) \$11.5 billion in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding. This amount, combined with the \$4 billion previously provided in the CARES Act, will reach the funding level needed to expand access to emergency shelter, short-term rental assistance, and housing stabilization and medical services for people experiencing homelessness. With its large homeless population, Massachusetts needs additional ESG funds to get people off the streets and out of dangerous congregate shelters into “Housing First,” for their health and safety and that of the community at large.

Thank you for considering this request and for your continued advocacy for affordable housing for Massachusetts residents. We will be in contact with your office to discuss what else we can do to secure these resources for the most vulnerable at-risk people in the next COVID funding package.

<Signers as of 7 pm 4/30/20:>

Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants

Mass Communities Action Network

Citizens Housing and Planning Association

Mass Coalition for the Homeless

Mass Association of Community Development Corporations

Chinese Progressive Association

National Alliance of HUD Tenants/MA Members

Mass Affordable Housing Alliance
Mass Senior Action Council
Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts
Mass Association of Community Action Programs
American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts
Mass Teachers Association
Mass Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Progressive Massachusetts
Health Care for All
Mass Climate Action Network
Mass Coalition for Adult Education
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Unite HERE Local 26
SEIU Local 888
Chelsea Collaborative
Berkshire Interfaith Organizing (BIO)
Berkshire Community Action Council
Community Development Organization of South Berkshire
Community Action Pioneer Valley
Springfield Partners in Community Action
Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance
Worcester Community Action Council
Christian Community Church (Worcester)
Shalom Neighborhood Center (Worcester)
Boston Tenant Coalition
Boston Homeless Solidarity Committee
Save Our Section 8/City Policy Committee (Boston)
Action for Boston Community Development
Union of Minority Neighborhoods
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation
Allston-Brighton Community Development Corporation
Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation
Fenway Community Development Corporation
Urban Edge (Boston)
Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (East Boston)
Mission Safe (Mission Hill/Boston)
Mayor's Office of Public Safety (Boston)
Community Teamwork Inc (Lowell)
Lowell Alliance
Community Action Inc (Haverill)
Greater Lawrence Community Action Council
Lawrence Community Works
Northeast Justice Center (Lawrence)
Essex County Community Organization
Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee
Homeowners Rehab, Inc (Cambridge)
Community Action Agency of Somerville
Leadership Through Empowering Communities (LEO/Lynn)
Quincy Community Action Program

Boston Area Youth Essential Services
Mercantile Wharf Tenants Association
Women Encouraging Empowerment (Revere)
One Revere
Revere Youth Action
Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Fall River
United Neighbors of Fall River
Inter-Church Council of Greater New Bedford
Community Development Partnership of Lower Cape Cod
Immigrants Assistance Center (New Bedford)
United Interfaith Action of Southeastern Massachusetts (UIA)
JETPAC
I Have A Future
ROCA
Midas Collaborative
North Star Learning Center
International Institute of New England
Haitian Evangelical Fellowship of Pastors of New England
True Alliance Center, In.
Haitian Americans United, Inc.
Rian Immigrant Center
<partial list>

<Please respond to: maht@saveourhomes.org by COB on Monday, May 4, 20200>