

July 1, 2020

Request for Governor Inslee to allocate rental relief funds for rental households financially impacted by COVID-10

Dear Governor Inslee,

The COVID-19 pandemic is creating unprecedented economic hardship on top of an already fragile rental housing market. We request that the State of Washington allocate rental relief funding for households that are up to 80% Area Median Income and financially impacted by COVID-19. Rental relief is a measure that can reduce the economic impact of COVID-19 for landlords, property managers and rental households and it can prevent homelessness.

The statewide proclamation enacting an eviction moratorium is a necessary protection to keep people housed during this pandemic. In the proclamation, a renter is expected to pay back the rent they missed during the moratorium, and this debt will be devastating for many of our community members. According to the [US Department of Housing & Urban Development](#), an average of the data from 2012-2016 indicates that 46% of renters in Thurston County are cost burdened (spend 30% or more of their income on housing), including 22% of renters who are severely cost burdened (spend 50% or more of their income on housing). Many renters already struggle to make ends meet, and the added financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic **will** push more people into poverty or further into poverty and increase housing instability.

[Washington state data](#) confirms that people of color disproportionately experience housing instability and homelessness and are disproportionately affected by the economic and health impacts of COVID-19. A rent relief program, accessible in multiple languages with targeted outreach, would promote equity for those at greatest risk for homelessness.

Here in Thurston County, some of the [largest property management companies estimate](#) that between 15-20% of their tenants have fallen behind on rent during the pandemic. Thurston County already struggles with a rapidly increasing rate of homelessness. The homeless crisis response system has decreased shelter capacity to meet physical distancing requirements with no reduction of unsheltered households. There is serious concern about the capacity of our already over-burdened services to handle a wave of evictions and increased homelessness.

We believe that CARES Act funding and any additional COVID-19 funds should be prioritized to provide financial relief specifically for missed rent accrued during the Eviction Moratorium and to provide additional rental assistance for the following several months. This is an equitable and responsible step forward to recover from the pandemic. This will ensure that landlords and property managers receive the money they need to operate their businesses, prevent homelessness and help reduce the harmful economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,
Thurston County area community organizations

This letter was written by the Thurston County Rental Housing Workgroup of Thurston Thrives.
www.thurstonthrives.org



Organizations in support of this letter:

Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties

Community Youth Services

Family Education and Support Services

Family Support Center South Sound

Homeless Housing Hub

Homes First

Housing Authority of Thurston County

Interfaith Works

Just Housing Olympia

North Thurston Public Schools

Olympia SURJ

Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council

Partners in Prevention Education

Pierce County AIDs Foundation

Quixote Communities

Sidewalk

South Sound Habitat for Humanity

Thurston County Housing Action Team

Thurston County Rental Housing Workgroup

Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services

TOGETHER!

YWCA of Olympia