



## East Bay Housing Organizations

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June 3, 2020

Honorable Supervisors  
Alameda County  
1221 Oak Street, Suite 536  
Oakland, California 94612

Dear Alameda County Board of Supervisors,

**East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO) encourages you to adopt a regular ordinance, without amendment or delay, establishing a moratorium on evictions during the COVID-19 public health emergency that mirrors the urgency ordinance previously adopted by the Board. We believe the provisions of the urgency ordinance were well-crafted; any attempt to weaken or dilute those provisions will inevitably result in a wave of evictions of some of our most vulnerable residents, disproportionately Black and Brown households.**

EBHO is a non-profit organization with over 500 organizational and individual members. For 35 years, we've worked to preserve, protect, and create affordable housing opportunities for low-income communities across the East Bay by educating, advocating, organizing, and building coalitions.

We want to thank you for your leadership back in April, when you voted unanimously to extend much-needed tenant protections across the County. These measures were indeed *necessary*. Too many jurisdictions have passed laws that are “moratoria” in name only. By contrast, you voted to protect the health, safety, and stability of our communities by ensuring that no resident will be evicted for reasons out of their control—whether now, in the midst of this crisis, or during the long road to recovery.

Since then, the state unemployment rate has hit a staggering 15.5 percent. As reported in the *New York Times*, some economists predict that as many as [42 percent of the jobs lost since the start of the pandemic will not reappear](#). Without the strong eviction protections included in the original ordinance, it will be nearly impossible for many of the estimated [52 percent of Alameda County renters who were already cost-burdened before the crisis](#) to pay down this debt on top of their usual rent. These are low income households who were already devoting more than 30 percent, and often more than 50 percent, of their limited incomes for housing. Repaying several months of back rent on top of their ordinary rent will be a substantial—and likely insurmountable—hardship for these households.

We need to be compassionate, and we need to be realistic. If you vote to reduce the length of the repayment period, or remove the provision that converts missed rent into a consumer debt, then we're guaranteed to see a steep increase in evictions, displacement, and homelessness once the

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moratorium expires and a lump sum of back rent is due. No one should lose their home during a pandemic due to an inability to pay rent that was caused by unprecedented circumstances beyond their control. Whether from a moral, fiscal, or public health perspective, it makes no sense to put more families out on the street at the very moment the County is spending millions of dollars to move unsheltered people into hotel rooms. It remains true that the best way to fight homelessness is to keep people housed in the first place.

At EBHO, we're acutely aware of the impacts of this crisis on small property owners and affordable housing providers—both of which are vital to preventing further loss of community wealth and affordability in low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods. But mission-driven property owners, like our developer members, understand in no uncertain terms that, while they need rent to maintain their properties, their needs shouldn't be secured in a way that harms the health and wellbeing of their tenants. Eviction isn't the solution during a pandemic and economic crisis; in fact, it runs the risk of aggravating both.

Instead, we encourage you to use a significant portion of existing relief funds to offer emergency rental and mortgage assistance to extremely-low-income and very-low-income households. In addition, we invite you to join us in advocating at the state and federal levels for financial relief that prioritizes renters and homeowners at risk of homelessness, small property owners, and non-profit affordable housing providers. In the interim, however, we need a true eviction moratorium to ensure that there's time for these far-reaching solutions to develop.

Thank you for standing with our most impacted community members during this extraordinary time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levin".

Jeffrey Levin  
Policy Director