

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

Millions of children and youth remain at-risk of being evicted from their homes without critical rental assistance to help them or their caregivers pay their bills. Americans deserve better. Senate Republicans ignored calls from across the country—from parents, advocates, young people, and housing providers—for rental assistance, and instead introduced a proposal that is out of touch with the experiences of American households, leaving millions of people behind.

Your Administration recently issued an order from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) instituting a federal rental eviction moratorium through December 31, 2020 for nonpayment of rent. While we appreciate the order's recognition that evictions pose a grave threat to individuals' and public health, and that "as many as 30–40 million people," are at risk of eviction, this action does not include any new funding to help people pay their rent so they can remain in their homes once the moratorium expires. In addition, the order does not prohibit landlords from charging late penalties and fees to renters who are struggling to pay rent.

Today, millions of households are facing impossible choices between paying the rent or mortgage, or purchasing food or medicine. Given recent spikes in COVID-19 caseloads and an economic crisis that continues to deepen, we urge you to work with Congress on a bipartisan basis to enact legislation that provides the emergency assistance renters need to stay in their homes.

Even before the pandemic, a quarter of all renters were spending half their incomes on housing, and more than 20 million children lived in households that struggled to afford housing.¹ This pandemic is not only revealing the inequities in our society, but exacerbating them. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau show that nearly 1-in-5 renters were behind on rent in July. This hardship fell more heavily on Black and brown renters and families with children, among whom more than 1-in-4 had fallen behind on rent.²

Black or Hispanic households with children are more than twice as likely to be behind on their rent or mortgage or struggle to get enough to eat.³ Research also shows that these circumstances too often lead to housing instability. We've seen how housing instability works hand-in-hand

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, "Children Living in Households with a High Housing Cost Burden in the United States," January 2020, available at:

<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7244-children-living-in-households-with-a-high-housing-cost-burden?loc=1&loc=1#detailed/1/any/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/any/14287,14288>

² U.S. Census Bureau, Week 12 Household Pulse Survey: July 16-July 21," July 29, 2020, available at:

<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/hhp/hhp12.html>

³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Children Facing Very High Hardship Rates," CBPP, August 6, 2020, available at <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/children-facing-very-high-hardship-rates>

with overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic families in the child welfare system, as families experiencing housing instability are more likely to be investigated by child welfare and have their children removed and placed in foster care compared to families with low incomes who have stable housing.⁴ And for those children that live with their grandparents, we see them empty their savings only to lose their homes and move to temporary hotels or motels, forcing them to convert these time-limited living spaces into classrooms and bedrooms to create safe places for their grandchildren during this pandemic.⁵ We know before the pandemic young people with foster care experiences struggled with housing instability and recent surveys reveal that more than 40 percent of young people report immediate or pending loss of housing as a result of the public health crisis.⁶ Without rental assistance for these young people and families, they will be forced to accrue insurmountable debt, fees, and fines, potentially post-dating evictions until the first of the year.

Evictions have mental health implications for children as well as mothers who experience higher rates of depression months after being forced out of their home, which negatively impacts children's development.⁷ Child health disparities, as a result of evictions, are compounded by the economic hardships faced by parents who are left with court orders and judgements that make it harder to secure new housing and maintain stable employment. While parents and students across the country face uncertainty this school year, children who are evicted or move because they can no longer afford rent may be forced to switch schools, resulting in greater disruptions in their academic achievement. Evictions during a pandemic have even more severe negative implications for children. Families who are evicted are forced to move in with others in overcrowded residences, or move to hotel rooms, shelters, cars or other situations, making remote learning for children and social distancing nearly impossible.

More than 20 million renters have experienced a job loss due to the pandemic, putting millions of households at risk of eviction in the coming months.⁸ As unemployment remains high and millions of families with children struggle to make ends meet, it is critical that your Administration and Senate Republicans return to the negotiating table and work to provide at least \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance to help millions – including families with children – keep a roof over their heads. Four months ago, the House passed the HEROES Act, which includes rental assistance, a uniform national eviction moratorium through March 27, 2021, and funds supporting homelessness service organizations and affordable housing providers who continue to make safe, affordable housing available for the families, youth, and individuals

⁴ Cyleste C. Collins, et al., "Housing instability and child welfare: Examining the delivery of innovative services in the context of a randomized controlled trial," *Children and Youth Services Review*, 108, January 2020, available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740919305985>

⁵ Eli Saslow, "May Rent. June Rent. Late Fees. Penalties.," *Washington Post*, August 15, 2020, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/08/15/eviction-coronavirus-houston/?arc404=true>

⁶ Johanna K.P. Greeson, Sara Jaffee, Sarah Wasch, "The Experiences of Foster Youth During COVID-19," *Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice, and Research*, May 2020.

⁷ Matthew Desmond and Rachel Tolbert Kimbro, "Eviction's Fallout: Housing Hardship, and Health," *Social Forces*, 1-30, 2015.

⁸ National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Covid-19 Eviction Crisis: An Estimated 30-40 Million People in America are At Risk," August 7, 2020, available at: https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/The_Eviction_Crisis_080720.pdf

they serve. It is past time to negotiate comprehensive legislation that will provide renters with the assistance they desperately need.

Housing instability and threat of evictions exemplify how the pandemic is falling hardest on the most vulnerable Americans, especially our children. Disruptions to every aspect of children's lives will have lasting, detrimental effects on their health, safety, and future success. We urge you to act now and in good faith to minimize the impact of this unprecedented public health pandemic on our children's future.

Sincerely,



SHERROD BROWN
United States Senator



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator

/s/ RON WYDEN

RON WYDEN
United States Senator

/s/ CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senator

/s/ CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO

CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO
United States Senator

/s/ ELIZABETH WARREN

ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator

/s/ ROBERT MENENDEZ

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator

/s/ JACK REED

JACK REED
United States Senator

/s/ TINA SMITH

TINA SMITH
United States Senator

/s/ BRIAN SCHATZ

BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

/s/ RICHARD J. DURBIN

RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator

/s/ SHELDON WHITEHOUSE

SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator

/s/ BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator

/s/ KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND
United States Senator

/s/ TAMMY BALDWIN
TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator

/s/ RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator

/s/ AMY KLOBUCHAR
AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator

/s/ TAMMY DUCKWORTH
TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senator

/s/ ROBERT P. CASEY JR.
ROBERT P. CASEY JR.
United States Senator

/s/ MAZIE K. HIRONO
MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator

/s/ BERNARD SANDERS
BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator

/s/ CORY A. BOOKER
CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senator

/s/ EDWARD J. MARKEY
EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senator

/s/ JEFFERY A. MERKLEY
JEFFERY A. MERKLEY
United States Senator

/s/ JOE MANCHIN III
JOE MANCHIN III
United States Senator

/s/ DEBBIE STABENOW
DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator

/s/ JACKY ROSEN
JACKY ROSEN
United States Senator

/s/ PATTY MURRAY
PATTY MURRAY
United States Senator

/s/ MARTIN HEINRICH
MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator

/s/ GARY C. PETERS
GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator

/s/ PATRICK LEAHY
PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator