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April 5, 2020

The Honorable Ned Lamont  
Governor of the State of Connecticut  
State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Urgent Need for Comprehensive Eviction Moratorium

Dear Governor Lamont,

We are deeply appreciative of the efforts you have made, through Executive Orders, to protect Connecticut residents through stay-at-home recommendations and the closure of retail businesses. We recognize that these actions are necessary to protect the community during a public health crisis; however, the secondary consequence has been that tens of thousands of workers have lost their jobs with little prospect for unemployment benefits in the near term. With April rent due in just a few days, we need bold action from you to protect our most vulnerable residents- low-income and unemployed renters, who bear the brunt of this public health emergency while having the fewest resources to do so.

These newly unemployed are not just worried about paying rent, they **cannot** pay their rent for the foreseeable future. While the Judicial Branch has suspended eviction proceedings until May 1, that deadline is less than 30 days away and landlords continue to serve tenants with eviction actions, most for nonpayment of rent.

Approximately **700 new eviction cases** have been filed since your declaration of a public health emergency on March 11<sup>th</sup>. That number includes **516 evictions** were filed since the closing of the courts for non-priority matters on March 16, 2020. We fear those numbers will explode starting this week, after rent is due on April 10, based on the unemployment data being published. Moreover, tenants continue to receive eviction papers instructing them to respond in person to courthouses that are now been closed, exposing them and their families to unacceptable health risks.

It is not just the unemployed, but the first-responders and front-line workers we rely on to keep our communities safe, who are at risk of eviction in the coming months. Hospital employees, grocery store clerks, delivery people, and bus drivers, to name a few, may become sick or quarantined from the effects of the virus. Many of these families live paycheck to paycheck. Connecticut cannot allow those who have been keeping us safe to be thrown into financial chaos and housing instability if they become sick themselves.

**We ask that you issue an Executive Order to protect our state's most vulnerable residents by:**

- **Extending the May 1 eviction moratorium until 30 days after the declaration of the end of the public health emergency or 30 days after the expiration of the federal eviction moratorium imposed by the federal CARES Act, whichever is later; and**
- **Prohibiting the service of new notices to quit.; and**
- **Suspending the filing of all new summary process actions and immediate dismissal of all actions filed since the public health emergency was declared;**

The federal CARES Act, effective on March 27, 2020, prohibits eviction filings for nonpayment of rent by a wide range of federally-subsidized landlords. Until July 26, 2020, these property owners are prohibited from taking any legal action against their tenants. After that date, property owners must still issue a notice to tenants to vacate, at least 30 days before filing an eviction, thus protecting tenants from court proceeding through August, 2020.

We need comparable protections for **all** Connecticut renters. It is important that tenants without the protections of federal law be treated equally, which requires an Executive Order banning service of notices to quits and all eviction filings, retroactive to the date you declared the public health emergency. This action is necessary to ensure that people are not evicted *en masse* as soon as the courts reopen, when families will be struggling still to recover from the myriad effects of the pandemic. The CARES Act provides states with billions of dollars in aid which can be used for, among other things, rent relief. But it will take time to receive, allocate, and distribute this money.

Low income families should not be evicted and forced into homelessness as they struggle to determine how to respond to back rent debt and wait for relief. They should be given time to obtain the resources available to them, to talk with their landlords, and otherwise resolve these debts without a pending eviction proceeding. Such actions only destroy credit ratings, and result in higher debt as tenants are forced to agree to pay the landlord's attorneys and court costs on top

of the debt to save their housing. The mere filing of an eviction – often referred to as the “Scarlett E” -- can affect a person’s ability to find safe, decent, affordable housing well into the future.

Much more will be needed, once the courts reopen, to provide rent relief to ensure housing stability for landlords and tenants alike. But the first step is a comprehensive eviction moratorium that lasts at least through August as we wait for you to be able to reopen state businesses, allowing people to return to work and start receiving paychecks, and time to process the money provided for rental assistance and other relief through the federal CARES Act.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent letter.

Sincerely,

*Shelley White*

Shelley White, Litigation Director

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