



June 16, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

VIA EMAIL

Re: Proposed Temporary Rental Assistance Program Reinforces Segregation

Dear Governor Lamont:

Hundreds of years of government sponsored policies, neglect, and inaction against explicit racism has built and maintained hyper-segregation in Connecticut. As a result, Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color are locked into under-resourced neighborhoods. This is because federal and state policies creating pathways to middle-class security through access to affordable homeownership historically excluded these groups. This legacy shapes the pandemic-related housing crisis we have today and demands an anti-racist response that will protect Black renters and other People of Color. The response must not widen an ever expanding racial wealth gap or perpetuate further segregation. The legacy of these governmental policies has already caused the brunt of the COVID pandemic to be borne by the very people harmed most by segregationist policies.

In Connecticut 60.5% of Black families and 65.8% of Latino families rent their homes compared to only 23.9% of white families. In addition, nearly 60% of Black renters and 55% of Latino renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent compared to 43% of white renters. Connecticut has received approximately \$1.4 billion in coronavirus relief funds. The State's credit ratings and rainy-day fund allow it to tap the bond market at historically low rates. Yet it has allocated 1% of funds received to assist tenants and stabilize the housing market, a miniscule commitment towards preventing the humanitarian crises that will result from a wave of evictions disproportionately affecting Black and brown tenants. This response replicates what has happened over the last 100 years each time state, federal, and private economic resources were used to mitigate the effect of a financial crisis. It must not happen again.

Every Connecticut policy decision must be unequivocally anti-racist. It must be informed by the need to reverse the inequities and economic violence inflicted on People of Color. The heavy and disproportionate financial toll the pandemic has taken on Black and brown people makes this all the more imperative. Failing to act to keep people in their homes by preventing evictions will ratify the past racist policies that led to today's crisis and will reinforce their lingering malignant effects.

An anti-racist rental assistance program would: 1) be broad-based and easy to access; 2) prohibit evictions for non-payment of rent; 3) mandate landlord participation; and, 4) provide tenant protections such as extended tenancies, rent stabilization, and mandated safe and sanitary properties. Minimally the State should commit 10% of Coronavirus Relief Funds to start such a program. Finally, this effort must be just the first step in centering race in the forefront of every economic policy decision to create a desegregated Connecticut.

Very truly yours,

The Staff of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center
Erin Kemple, Executive Director

cc:

Secretary of the Office of Policy & Management Melissa McCaw
Commissioner Department of Housing Seila Mosquera-Bruno
Attorney General William Tong

The Connecticut Senate Democratic Caucus: *Sen. President Pro Tempore Martin Looney, Sen. Majority Leader Bob Duff, Sen. John Fonfara, Sen. Doug McCrory, Sen. Saud Anwar, Sen. Steve Cassano, Sen. Derek Slap, Sen. Matt Lesser, Sen. Gary Winfield, Sen. Christine Cohen, Sen. Mary Abrams, Sen. James Maroney, Sen. Joan Hartley, Sen. Cathy Osten, Sen. Marilyn Moore, Sen. Dennis Bradley, Sen. Julie Kushner, Sen. Will Haskell, Sen. Carlo Leone, Sen. Mae Flexer, Sen. Norm Needleman and Sen. Alex Kasser*

The Connecticut Senate Republican Caucus: *Sen. Republican Leader Len Fasano, Sen. Republican Leader Pro Tempore Kevin Witkos, Sen. Eric Berthal, Sen. Dan Champagne, Sen. Tony Hwang, Sen. John Kissel, Sen. Henri Martin, Sen. Rob Sampson, Sen. Gennaro Bizzarro, Sen. Paul Formica, Sen. Kevin Kelly, Sen. George Logan, Sen. Craig Miner, Sen. Heather Somers*

The Connecticut Legislative Black & Puerto Rican Caucus: *State Rep. Brandon McGee, Jr., Chair, State Rep. Gerry Reyes, Jr., Vice-Chair, and members of the caucus*

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