

April 10, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, Washington 98504-00023

Dear Governor Inslee:

Given the extraordinary demands on your continued leadership of the State of Washington during this time of crisis, we write to request that you create a funded program to assist tenants in paying their rent.

We urge you to expand access to and investment in emergency rental assistance for all Washingtonians experiencing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 virus. Rental assistance is proven to successfully assist renters in maintaining their housing during a personal financial hardship and provides the assistance necessary to allow rental housing providers to continue providing affordable, safe and accessible housing options for Washington's residents.

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, Washington's rapid growth and inability to maintain housing production to meet demand has created a significant need for rental assistance for renters.

- Since 2010, the population of Washington has [increased by 12.1 percent](#).
- More than [1 million residents](#) call an apartment home.
- 71 percent of extremely low income renters [spend more than half of their income](#) on housing.
- [23 percent of low-income renters](#) needing rental assistance receive federal rental assistance.
- Almost 500,000 Washingtonians [have filed for unemployment](#) since March 8, 2020.
- Average [Fair Market Rent](#) (FMR) for Washington state is \$1,181 per month.¹
- Approximately [one in four rental units](#) in the United States are federally backed by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac or Federal Housing Administration.

¹ Average based on total Fair Market Rent by County for 2020. Note however, that FMR for King County is significantly higher than any other metropolitan area in Washington.

Metropolitan Area Name	Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Four-Bedroom
Seattle-Bellevue, WA HUD Metro FMR Area	\$1,627	\$1,741	\$2,099	\$2,993	\$3,524

State action to provide flexible rental assistance to all renters in need of financial assistance due to COVID-19 is essential to maintaining economic consistency during the pandemic and when the State of Emergency ends.

Washington is not alone in addressing the immediate need for rental assistance. Many other states are making investments in rental assistance programs.

- The state of Massachusetts has invested \$5 million from [MassHousing](#), which administers the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, to their Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program “[to keep households in stable situations from facing emergencies over the loss of income, an increase in expenses of both.](#)”
- In the State of Delaware, the [Governor is providing up to \\$1,500 in emergency housing assistance](#) to renters affected by COVID-19. In conjunction with this, the Governor extended the eviction moratorium for nonpayment. The Delaware State Housing Authority provided \$2million and one County provided \$500,000. Eligibility for the new program requires household incomes at 80% AMI or less, and requires proof that COVID-19 has impacted the applicant’s employment or income beginning in March 2020 or later.
- In Minnesota, [landlord and tenant advocates are seeking a \\$100 million](#) emergency rental assistance fund, that would be distributed through an existing rental assistance program in all counties and tribal areas. Appropriations were not included in a one-day session earlier to see where and to what extent federal dollars may be available to provide rental assistance.

If every individual seeking unemployment assistance seeks rental assistance, Washington would need nearly \$600 million a month. As partners to our residents and to our public officials, we know that as rental housing providers we have a role to play too. We know rental assistance alone is not tenable. Our members continue to work with their residents to make sure they have access to the resources they need so they can continue to pay their monthly expenses, including rent, this includes offering payment plans, forgoing late payments and sharing as much information on rental assistance opportunities as possible

We are growingly concerned many renters are under the impression that the current ban on evictions during this crisis means they will not have to pay their rent when the ban is lifted. We urge you to also help us in educating the millions of renters in our State that if they can pay their rent, they should and if they can’t they should communicate with their housing providers as soon as possible.

A statewide rental assistance program focused on those renters impacted by COVID-19 is critical to maintaining the rental housing ecosystem and creating stability for renters seeking financial relief in this unprecedented crisis. We urge you to investment state dollars in rental assistance to relieve the pressure on renters and rental housing providers alike.

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of Washington State
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With appreciation for both your leadership and consideration,

/S/ Brett Waller

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Washington Multi-Family Housing Association

/S/ Kyle Woodring

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Rental Housing Association of Washington

/S/ Chester Baldwin

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Washington Landlord Association

/S/ Jim Henderson

Jim Henderson
National Association of
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