



December 23, 2020

The Honorable Robert R. Redfield, M.D.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Redfield:

AARP, on behalf of our millions of members and all older Americans nationwide, urges you to extend the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) federal eviction moratorium, which is set to expire on December 31st. The moratorium should be extended at least through March of next year to allow for the new Congress and Administration to enact remedies to avert massive evictions while the public health emergency generated by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to escalate in these winter months.

Older adults already bear the brunt of coronavirus infections and deaths. At the same time, significant numbers of older renters are facing difficulty meeting their rental payment obligations. In fact, the November 23 U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey estimates that nearly three million households age 55 and older, about 23 percent, reported no or only slight confidence in their ability to make the next month's payment.

The eviction moratorium provides essential protections that keep renters stably housed regardless of the economic insecurity they may be facing in this once-in-a-century health crisis. It is critically important to keep the moratorium in place beyond the end of 2020 as evictions will exacerbate the pandemic, leading to avoidable suffering and deaths. Living arrangements most often forced upon those who are evicted -- such as doubling up with family or friends in overcrowded housing, transiency, and the consequent inability to social distance and self-quarantine -- encourage the spread of the coronavirus. Persons who sadly may be relegated to homeless shelters or the streets will find it difficult to follow COVID-19 hygiene advisories such as hand-washing and social distancing.

Older adults, if evicted, face additional risk factors as the virus disproportionately affects those with pre-existing health conditions, which are more prevalent among this population. These individuals often lack physical and technological resources, and fear putting their health in jeopardy in the housing search process, making it more difficult to find and secure new shelter. These concerns are magnified for older African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and members of other racial minority groups, for whom the pandemic has brought long-standing health and economic inequities into sharp focus.

Older renters experience a further array of factors that, particularly in a pandemic, increase their precarity. In 2017, 54 percent of renters age 65 and older were cost-burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing. But for those earning less than \$15,000 per year, the share of older renters who are cost-burdened climbs to 72 percent. These individuals are also frequently food insecure and likely have unaddressed health conditions. Many have lost their home health aides due to the pandemic.

The AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE), in the District of Columbia, reports an uptick in cases of landlords threatening eviction. Landlords of larger properties appear more likely than smaller landlords to severely pressure older LCE clients for payment. In one case, an older person returned to his home after three weeks of treatment in the hospital for COVID-19 to find that the locks had been changed. He was forced to take shelter in a van in a garage until he was strong enough to take further action. LCE obtained a preliminary injunction allowing the tenant to return home. A pro bono attorney is currently suing for damages.

Not only will evictees be put at greater risk, but the entire public health system will be severely impacted if the moratorium expires. Hospitals and emergency services that today are at or near their breaking points would be burdened with the additional pressure created by new COVID-19 infections ensuing from millions of evictions.

We also urge you to address certain limitations embodied in the CDC's current eviction moratorium order by taking the following steps:

- Update the eviction moratorium to be automatic and universal. At a minimum, landlords should be required to provide renters notice of their rights under the moratorium.
- Prohibit landlords from pursuing eviction proceedings unless they attest to the court, under penalty of perjury, that they have not received a signed declarative statement invoking the moratorium protections.
- Revise the Frequently Asked Questions document to make it clear that the moratorium applies to all stages of evictions, including filings; close loopholes to cover "no fault" evictions and evictions at the end of lease terms; and prevent landlords from challenging tenants' statements claiming protection in court.
- Enforce the eviction moratorium provided in the order, and make available a convenient complaint reporting mechanism, such as a hotline.

As the nation continues to confront the enormous health and economic crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to extend the eviction moratorium until at least the end of March 2021 and make the changes described above so that older renters and renters of all ages are protected from the potential harm of evictions on families and our public health system. Please feel free to let me know if you have any questions, or have your staff contact Debra Alvarez in Government Affairs at (202) 434-3814.

Sincerely,



Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs