



## PENINSULA SOLIDARITY COHORT

INTERFAITH LEADERS LEVERAGING MORAL POWER FOR THE COMMON GOOD

January 14, 2021

### **RE: Keep Families Safe at Home - Support AB15 and AB16**

Dear San Mateo City Council,

We hope this letter finds you and your loved ones safe in the midst of the myriad crises we face. Serving in these unprecedented times is challenging beyond measure, even more so now with the threats of violence at state capitols across the country in the coming days. We pray for your safety, your health, and your courage, and we deeply appreciate your dedication to all Californians and especially to the most vulnerable among us.

As a cohort of forty-five spiritual leaders from diverse traditions in San Mateo County, we know how difficult it is to serve right now. People are hurting; many are struggling simply to survive. In just a few weeks, on January 31st, approximately two million people in our state who rent their homes will lose their protections from eviction, as AB 3088 expires. Without this protection, thousands of families—including those with pre-existing health conditions and children learning from home—face homelessness or displacement in the midst of a global pandemic that is raging across our state.

In San Mateo County alone, over 15,000 households--13 percent of the renting population--will be at risk of eviction. Millions of people in California have lost income due to the pandemic, and many of them have been accruing rent debt for months. With the rates of infection still increasing daily and the recent extension of stay-at-home orders, the situation has only worsened. People without means will not be able to pay rent on February 1st, much less pay back rent that has accrued over the course of the pandemic.

Small property owners are also in a bind. Like their tenants, landlords are suffering loss of income due to the pandemic. They, too, need help. In San Mateo County, rental assistance programs have been invaluable to both tenants and landlords, but the escalation of the crisis demands broader, systemic change. We desperately need bold and decisive action at the state level.

**Therefore we urge you as a city council to send your support to the State Assembly to support two bills introduced by Assemblymember David Chiu: AB- 15 and AB-16. These two bills together can help alleviate the crisis for both tenants and landlords and can end the cycle of short-term extensions of eviction moratoriums alone. AB-15 extends the statewide evictions protections for people who cannot pay rent due to the pandemic *for the duration of economic hardship*, while AB-16 provides a framework for addressing the severe rent debt that will provide urgent relief for both renters and landlords.**

*We respectfully request that you add this to your agenda for your Tuesday meeting.*

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly.” The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare this truth with terrifying clarity, teaching us that the health and wellbeing of each one of us depends on the health and wellbeing of all of us. As interfaith leaders, it is our deep hope that this awareness infuses decision making at all levels of society, serving as a moral compass as we strive together to build communities of dignity, justice and belonging for all.

At the start of this new year, let’s take bold action on behalf of a shared moral vision that prioritizes the wellbeing of those most at risk, those most in need of support. Together, we can work to create a world where there is truly “no needy among you...and if there is a needy person among you...do not harden your heart and shut your hand... Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for what he needs” (Deuteronomy 15: 4, 7). By ensuring that every single one of us has a safe place to live while we shelter in place, we are investing together in the possibility of a livable future for all.

On behalf of the Peninsula Solidarity Cohort,

Rev. Dr. Penny Nixon, PSC Co-Director  
Rev. Dr. Marlyn Bussey, PSC Co-Director  
Rabbi Corey Helfand, PSC Planning Team Member  
Dr. Tovis Page, PSC Program Coordinator