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May 27, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Request for Extension of Current Residential Eviction Moratorium Through 2021

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the City of Redwood City, we write to request that your Administration's "California Comeback" Budget plan include provisions to extend the current COVID-19 eviction moratorium protections set to expire on June 30, 2021 through the end of the calendar year.

Redwood City has been a leader in San Mateo County on housing and homelessness initiatives including, most recently the launching of our own COVID-19 Rent Relief Program in March 2020 and establishing a Temporary Safe Parking Program in October 2020 to address health and safety for residents living in RVs on the streets in Redwood City. Since the beginning of the pandemic, our City has invested \$1.8 million in rent relief from City's General Fund, the City's Affordable Housing Fund, and federal CDBG funding. Leveraging our \$1.8 million with San Mateo County funding, the City has provided over \$3.3 million in rent relief to over 1,000 households and is now assisting local residents in applying for California COVID19 Rent Relief. Redwood City is also home to two hotels purchased by San Mateo County as part of Project Homekey.

In addition, we are actively engaging property owners and tenants while working on an anti-displacement strategic plan to help reduce displacement in our community. However, despite our best efforts to provide the assistance needed to all City residents, our staff has witnessed many families who have attempted to pay their rent by accumulating debt through credit cards, friends, family, or predatory lenders. The families we serve do everything they can to pay their rent, even when faced with loss or reduction in employment multiple times. According to Faith in Action Bay Area, a large network of congregations and schools in San Francisco and San Mateo counties, "many families have already left the region due to the inability to pay rent, fear of debt, and fear of homelessness; massive displacement has already occurred". Members of the City Council have met personally with tenants who are struggling to stay afloat. Without sustained action by the State, we fear that we will see more displacement in our city and region.

Implementation of the rental assistance program established by SB 91 [Chapter 2, Statutes of 2021] has been very difficult, with landlords and tenants alike reporting barriers to participating in this program.

Landlords have expressed concerns that they are not receiving funding in a timely manner from the State while tenants are still trying to navigate the complexities of this program. We encourage your Administration and the Legislature to work collaboratively to streamline this program to ensure that funding is being distributed expeditiously while eliminating barriers to entry. Additionally, to increase awareness and participation in the program, we ask that the state strongly encourage local jurisdictions to proactively work with trusted community based organizations to help conduct focused outreach in local communities. These steps will ensure all who need this critical assistance can access it.

The COVID-19-related health, economic and financial impacts on working class and immigrant families throughout our community remains pronounced—even while the economy begins to reopen. We appreciate that the “California Comeback” budget package announced by your Administration which proposes substantial funding to cover all back-rent and includes funding for future rent, key actions to help both tenants and property owners. Continuation of the current moratorium coupled with sustained funding is the only way to ensure that our most vulnerable residents do not slip through the cracks of the system and can remain in their homes.

A key priority in our local pandemic response has been to prioritize the needs of our most vulnerable residents, and we believe that extending the current COVID-19 eviction moratorium through the balance of 2021, in conjunction with the financial support you have proposed, would help those most in need in Redwood City. We applaud the leadership and dedication your Administration has shown throughout this historic global pandemic to protect the health and safety of all Californians.

Sincerely,



Diane Howard
Mayor, Redwood City

cc: City Council, City of Redwood City
The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair Assembly Budget
The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair Senate Budget
The Honorable Kevin Mullin, Assembly District 22
The Honorable Josh Becker, Senate District 13
The Honorable Marc Berman, Assembly District 24
Jason Elliot, Senior Advisor, Governor Gavin Newsom
The Honorable David Chiu, Chair, Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee
The Honorable Scott Weiner, Chair Senate Housing Committee
Katie Kolitsos, Senior Advisor, The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker, California State Assembly
Diane Griffiths, Deputy Chief of Staff, The Honorable Toni Atkins, Pro Tempore, California State Senate