



August 3, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Attention: amber_ebarb@murkowski.senate.gov

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with our Coalition members and other Alaskan stakeholders regarding the upcoming COVID-19 relief package. As we discussed on the call, the pandemic has shed a bright light on the existing fragilities of our homeless response system as well as the affordable housing crisis in our state. Now, more than ever, Alaskans are struggling to decide whether to spend their waning resources on feeding their own families or making next month's housing payment.

According to a weekly survey by the Census, **1 in 4 adults in the state** either missed their last housing payment or have little-to-no confidence of being able to make next month's housing payment. Across the state, our existing housing and food security systems have seen an unprecedented increase in requests for help. The United Way reported 2-1-1 operators received **8,420 calls from Alaskans seeking assistance** related to either housing, utility assistance, or food assistance in the month of June alone. *That amount of calls in a single month represents nearly half of the total call amount for the entire 2019 calendar year.*

We are at a tipping point while protections such as the moratorium on evictions and additional unemployment assistance have expired. Our existing homeless response system and food security systems will not be able to handle a sharp increase in need caused by the impending eviction wave. On behalf of Alaskans experiencing homelessness, and the many more who will as a result of the economic fallout from COVID-19, we respectfully ask you share with and urge the negotiating team to include these items in the upcoming relief package:

- 1. \$100 Billion in Emergency Rental Assistance**

S. 3685/H.R. 6820, the "Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act" would provide \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance to help low-income renters avoid evictions and homelessness. Emergency rental assistance is needed to avoid creating a financial cliff for renters when eviction moratoriums are lifted and back-rent is owed, and to ensure the continued viability of our country's essential affordable housing infrastructure.





2. National, Uniform Moratorium on Evictions

S. 4097/H.R. 7402, the “Protecting Renters from Evictions and Fees Act” will extend and broaden the eviction moratoriums included in the CARES Act to protect all renters in the U.S. for a full year. This protection is especially important in a moment when our collective health depends on each of us staying home.

3. \$11.5 Billion in Emergency Resources for People Experiencing Homelessness

S. 3856/H.R. 6724, the “Public Health Emergency Shelter Act” will provide an additional \$11.5 billion to respond to and prevent outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness.

People who are homeless and contract COVID-19 are twice as likely to be hospitalized, two to four times as likely to require critical care, and two to three times as likely to die than others in the general public. If unchecked, as many as 20,000 people who are homeless could require hospitalization and nearly 3,500 could die, with enormous implications for individuals, their communities, and our already overstretched hospital systems. Funds are needed to minimize the number of people living in homeless encampments and congregate shelters and identify alternative space, including hotels, for isolation and self-quarantine, as well as funding for short-term rental assistance and housing stabilization.

We appreciate your commitment to ensuring that our most vulnerable neighbors are kept safe during these unprecedented times and that the needs of those who’s housing status is hanging by a thread will be met in this upcoming COVID-19 relief package. Again, we ask you to communicate your support for the above items to Senate leadership during these important negotiations. Please let us know if we can assist in any way.

Sincerely,

Brian Wilson, Executive Director
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