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New $2 Million Rental Assistance Fund Aims to Keep Thousands of Coachella Valley Families in their Homes

Fund is part of a public-private coordinated strategy to economically empower Coachella Valley communities and provide housing stability during COVID-19

PALM DESERT, CA — Today Lift to Rise announced a new rental assistance fund set to launch June 1st. With more than $2 million in initial seed commitments the fund will be positioned to help thousands of Coachella Valley families most impacted by COVID-19 shutdowns stay in their homes.

In the coming weeks Lift to Rise and partners will establish eligibility priorities and determine the most effective way to distribute funding. Additional details will follow and interested residents are encouraged to add their names to an online interest list available at www.lifttorise.org/protection

The rental assistance fund marks the second phase of a historic public-private coordinated COVID-19 response effort. The first phase included an emergency cash assistance fund, which to date has provided $200 to nearly 2,000 Coachella Valley households and will continue to process payments to the remaining 4,000 households that applied. With that fund sunsetting at the end of May, Lift to Rise and community partners are moving to provide more substantial assistance at the level needed to keep families housed.

“There are no shortcuts to housing stability. We need to provide enough assistance so people are made whole and actually pay their rent,” said Gary Painter, Professor and Director, USC Sol Price School of Public Policy and Lift to Rise Board Member. “We know from research that emergency assistance that allows a household to pay the rent increases housing stability and reduces homelessness. The benefits of a prevention program like this can exceed the costs by a factor of 2 to 1.”
A focus on affordable housing is a natural extension of the Lift to Rise two year Action Plan, which in coordination with more than fifty Collaborative Action Network partners, imagines a future where all Coachella Valley families are healthy, stable, and thriving. A planned third phase involves longer term and sustained efforts to reduce the number of rent burdened Coachella Valley households, including a regional pipeline of more than 2,000 households and launching a Housing Catalyst Fund in early Fall 2020.

“Our Coachella Valley, a place already facing significant economic insecurity and rent burden, is now severely impacted by the near collapse of the region’s tourism and entertainment economy, said Riverside County Supervisor V. Manuel Perez. “The ability of our region to come together like this and keep people in their houses reflects the values and spirit that remain so strong here despite our challenges. Thank you to Lift to Rise for their incredible work launching the rental assistance fund. The County of Riverside is proud to be a partner in these efforts.”

The financial assistance efforts compliment an ongoing Economic Protection Plan which connects local families and residents to resources to help with housing, food insecurity, medical care, bill paying, transportation, education and legal services.

To date, more than 6,000 people have sought help through the Economic Protection Plan. 60 percent of applicants report being out of work due to COVID-19 and 55 percent report incomes under $20,000. More than 82 percent of applying households identify as Latino or Hispanic and 39% of respondents indicate having children age five or under in their household. Most respondents are requiring assistance with housing related costs such as utility bills and rent.

The coalition members behind the Economic Protection Plan are coordinating to help local guide families through the process of signing-up for assistance. Financial support from the fund and many of the additional resources are available to Coachella Valley qualifying residents regardless of citizenship status.

“A coordinated and informed response effort like we are seeing in the Coachella Valley does not happen by accident,” said Leticia De Lara, CEO for the Regional Access Project Foundation. “It is the result of relationships and trust that was built across sectors long before we ever knew of COVID-19. There is so much more to do, but the people of Coachella Valley have hope and a lot we can be proud of.”

The Economic Protection Plan is supported by Lift to Rise, United Way of the Desert, Regional Access Project Foundation, Desert Healthcare District, Inland Empire Community Foundation, Inland Empire Health Plan, Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau, Pueblo Unido CDC, Desert Community Energy, and the County of Riverside Office of Supervisor Perez, Executive Office, Housing Authority, Workforce Development Centers, and Departments of Public Social Services and Public Health.

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