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ASSISTANT WHIP

December 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

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Dear Speaker Pelosi:

I write to you today out of urgent concern for those in my community facing the imminent threat of eviction due to the pending expiration of provisions to protect tenants and assist property owners due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the face of increased unemployment, an insufficient safety net, and the rising threat of COVID-19 in my community and across the country, it is imperative that Congress prioritize housing insecurity in any relief legislation we pass this year. I urge you in the strongest possible terms to include both an extension of the federal eviction moratorium as well as rental assistance to help tenants and property owners keep housing operational during this difficult time.

The House of Representatives has already shown a commitment to tenants and property owners during the pandemic. The CARES Act, signed into law on March 27th, 2020, enacted a 120-day moratorium on evictions in homes receiving federal subsidies or a property with a federally backed mortgage, a 60-day foreclosure moratorium, the right to request and receive mortgage forbearance for up to 1 year, as well as \$4 billion in Emergency Solutions Grants to be used for emergency shelter, homelessness prevention, short- and medium-term rental assistance, and supportive services. The HEROES Act expanded upon these efforts by extending the eviction and foreclosure moratoria to all renters and homeowners, increasing the eviction moratorium to 12 months, offering an additional \$5 billion for Emergency Solutions Grants, \$50 billion for Emergency Rental Assistance, and \$21 billion in Assistance to Homeowners to be used towards mortgage payments, property taxes, property insurance, utilities, and other housing related costs. During this unprecedented time, we must be nimble to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity wherever possible – that is why the inclusion of these provisions in any upcoming legislation is essential.

Housing insecurity and homelessness is a significant issue in my community in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and across Western New York. A strong coalition of government and community groups persistently advocate on behalf of those at risk of homelessness, sometimes fighting out-of-town, absentee landlords who lack ties to our community. This work is even more important as the weather grows severe during winter. And it has been compounded by the pandemic. Researchers have found a

correlation between the end of eviction moratoriums and an increase in the incidence and mortality of COVID-19.¹ We must continue protections and rental assistance for tenants to prevent any further harm.

Again, I appreciate your efforts to negotiate a strong and comprehensive relief bill to provide essential assistance to our communities struggling with the pandemic, including strengthening our safety net to keep many of my constituents in their homes during this perilous time. These protections can save lives, should be extended and enhanced.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress

¹ Leifheit, Kathryn M. and Linton, Sabriya L. and Raifman, Julia and Schwartz, Gabriel and Benfer, Emily and Zimmerman, Frederick J and Pollack, Craig, Expiring Eviction Moratoriums and COVID-19 Incidence and Mortality (November 30, 2020). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3739576> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3739576>