



August 10, 2021

Dear Supervisor Hannigan,

During the past few months, Common Ground members have worked closely with Catholic Charities to help hundreds of tenants and landlords apply for the rental assistance they need to avoid homelessness and foreclosure. Our goal is for struggling families to get the help they need to stay in their homes. Time is limited, as the state and local eviction moratoria are set to expire as early as September 30th. We share the frustration that so little of the available funds have gotten to the people that need it, and we are concerned that recent changes to the program's management could cause further delays without your action. We are asking you to take the following three steps to get the aid out responsibly and rapidly:

- 1. Increase staff capacity to process applications and issue checks before the September 30th deadline.** We urge you to ask county staff to increase the number of people who will process applications. We understand that currently only 3 people are assigned to process 1800 applications. Based on the experience to date, that will be wholly inadequate.
- 2. Maintain the county's commitment to pay both past and future rent.** The county approved promotional materials and the program application which said applicants may apply for future rent and arrears, just as they can with the state program. We have heard that county counsel is asking to amend this to discontinue payment of future rent. Many families in crisis have taken out loans from other sources to pay rent during the crisis and are not eligible for past rental assistance. The payment of future rent is critical to keeping these families housed and helping them avoid financial ruin. Changing the policy now is both unfair and puts landlords and tenants in jeopardy at a time when the county's unemployment rate is rising. **The county must follow through on the commitment to pay future rent and arrears as stated in the county-approved promotional materials and application for all renters.**
- 3. Communicate with applicants the status of their application.** At this important transition point, communication to applicants is an imperative. A mass email to all applicants should go out providing the status of their applications, expected completion date, and contact information they can use to get feedback.

The county now bears the responsibility to make sure people know what position they are in and whether they will need to apply to the state program to receive the full amount of assistance for which they qualify.

We look forward to your response. Please let us know when you can meet with us to discuss these issues. You can contact David Lindsay (email <mailto:dalindsay16@gmail.com>) with your availability information.

Best regards,

Common Ground Housing Team