



May 8, 2020

3025 4th Street, NE, Suite 122
Washington, DC 20017

Senator Susan Collin, Chairwoman
Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee
Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Room S-128, The Capitol,
Washington, D.C.

Representative David E. Price, Chairman
Representative Mario Diaz-Balart, Ranking
Member
House Subcommittee
Transportation, and Housing
and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairwoman Collin, Chairman Price, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart,

RE: COVID-19 Moratorium on Rents Increase

We are Africa Faith and Justice Network, a Catholic network of 28 religious congregations and a nationwide supporting membership. We write to call your attention to the needs of tenants across the US, including our members, who are financially devastated by COVID-19. Many tenants have lost their jobs, making it hard to pay their bills including rent. We continue to hear financial hardship horror stories and looking at the unemployment numbers we know that many people are hurting.

We are aware that some governors signed executive orders prohibiting evictions for the duration of their COVID-19 State Health Emergency. However, while people are not evicted, they still owe late fees in addition to rent. This is the situation tenants are facing currently:

- Tenants have and continue to receive lease renewal notices which include rent increases.
- Because of the lockdown, tenants cannot relocate to where rent is cheaper because rental offices have suspended showing spaces. In such cases, tenants have reported being obliged to sign lease renewals which include increases of up to 6% of their current agreement.

Behind this report are faces of fathers, mothers, children, elderly and young people. Their economic hardship will not end after local authorities lift their Emergency Declarations Orders. We are aware that landlords have bills to pay as well, including paying salaries and maintenance but they can still do so without increasing fees for tenants.

As you consider policies to stabilize the economy, we ask that you support or introduce a Tenants-Landlords Financial Win-Win legislation which includes:

- A moratorium on lease increases for at least a year starting March 1, 2020, the day President Donald Trump proclaimed the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States a national emergency.

This advocacy ask takes tenants and landlords together on the road to a full economic recovery of this sector.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aniedi Okure".

Rev. Aniedi Okure, OP
Executive Director