



August 13, 2020

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
 Chairman Buddy Mendes
 2281 Tulare Street
 Fresno, California 93721

Sent Via Email

RE: AGENDA ITEM #5 HOUSING RETENTION PROGRAM

Dear Board of Supervisors,

First, we would like to thank Supervisor Pacheco and Supervisor Quintero for their leadership and commitment to helping renters in Fresno County by setting up a Housing Retention Program. We also thank Supervisor Pacheco for consulting Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability and other community based organizations in the development of this program. We firmly believe that this program has the potential to alleviate many hardships that low income rural residents are facing in the wake of the global pandemic.

According to census data, 60% of renters in Fresno County are cost-burdened, and over 75% of lower income residents are paying more than 30% of their income to pay rent. With cases of COVID-19 rising in this county, people out of work, and families struggling to put food on the table it is more important than ever to ensure Fresno County does all it can to ensure people will be able to stay in their homes.

We respectfully request Board of Supervisors expand and strengthen the proposed Housing Retention Program by doing the following to ensure families in Fresno County are protected:

- A minimum allocation of \$5 million dollars, similar to the amount allocated for the “Helping Underserved Businesses” grant, as keeping people in their homes should be Fresno County’ top priority given the lack of rental protections.
- Preference to Fresno County residents who live in Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities
- Allow of informal documentation for tenants without a formal lease agreement
- In addition to supporting tenants with past due rent, the program should also protect tenants that will be unable to pay rent on time in the coming months. This will avoid potential three day notices and eviction processing when the Judicial Council orders are lifted.
- Ensure utility payments (water, electricity, etc.) are eligible for funding
- If the funds will be given to landlords, the landlord must be required to provide proof of payment to the tenant
- Landlords must provide documentation to renter that rent was paid
- Remove the affidavit and third party verification requirement for those unable to show proof of loss of income and show documentation of loss of income due to COVID-19
- Ensure that any additional eligibility requirements added will be discussed in a public meeting with input from all stakeholders

We look forward to discussing our suggestions and working together to ensure this program reaches the hundreds of residents in need of assistance.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Respectfully,

Leslie Martinez, Policy Advocate, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
 Nayamin Martinez, Executive Director, Central California Environmental Justice Network
 Crisantema Gallardo, 99Rootz Director, Power California
 Genoveva Islas, Executive Director, Cultiva La Salud and Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas
 Andy Levine, Faith in the Valley
 Sandra Celedon, Executive Director, Building Healthy Communities Fresno
 Ashley Rojas, Executive Director, Fresno Barrios Unidos
 Suget Lopez, Executive Director, Líderes Campesinas
 Pedro Hernandez, Outreach and Engagement Manager, Audubon California
 Daniel O’Connell, Executive Director, Central Valley Partnership
 Kevin Hamilton, Executive Director, Central California Asthma Collaborative

