

CHINATOWN CALL TO ACTION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19!

COVID-19 affects everyone, but the impact on Chinatown started early and has been particularly severe. Although people of Asian descent are not more likely to catch and spread COVID-19 than people of other ethnicities, our communities have been physically attacked and verbally threatened. Gentrification, xenophobia, and quarantine measures have led to disastrous consequences for the Chinatown community.

Before the call for self-quarantine, we lost our last remaining full-service grocery stores Ai Hoa and G & G market that would have provided fundamental supplies to our community. Starting as early as in January, when the crisis intensified in China, restaurants, gift shops, massage parlors and other small businesses in Chinatown began to experience a drastic drop in business due to sinophobia. Workers had their hours cut while evictions are at an all time high. As of March 2020, all the kiosks in The Shop, which provide home supplies and toiletries to low-income families are facing evictions by Redcar Properties.

In the past few days, multiple Latinx leaders of the Hillside Villa Tenants' Association have seen their hours cut while they continue to fight for Eminent Domain because their slumlord Tom Botz increased rent 200%. A Khmer leader of 920 Everett Tenant Association is facing a layoff while being threatened with eviction by the new landlord VF Development. The All Chinatown Tenant Union is led by the elderly and the disabled living in SROs. Their access to vital resources and public services will become even more challenging. These problems will only worsen in time, and will not be resolved with an emergency measure of two to three weeks.

City, state, and federal authorities have been slow to act. Chinatown Community for Equitable Development, All Chinatown Tenant Union, and our allies call for the mobilization of resources to support all people and small businesses that are hurt during the pandemic, and especially the most vulnerable in our community and in Los Angeles. We must learn from the experiences of people in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the PRC, who have dealt with multiple epidemics of this kind that the effects are neither short term nor limited to those suffering directly from the illness. We demand the state of California, the city of Los Angeles, corporations, landlords, business owners and non-profits across Los Angeles to establish the following measures during the state of emergency, with the possibility of extending them for up to at least 24 months or more:

- Support an immediate moratorium on rent hikes and evictions for all renters. This should be a complete moratorium, including closure of the relevant courts; people should not have to prove that they were affected by COVID-19 to stay in their homes during the pandemic.

- Extend the eviction moratorium to all small businesses who had to shut down or limit hours of operation.
- Implement rent forgiveness for all renters including Section 8, affordable housing units, market-rate units, and small business owners during the state of emergency, and then at least 50 % of rent reduction as recovery support.
- Halt all street sweeps that negatively impact our unhoused neighbors, and open up the 93,000 vacant units throughout Los Angeles, including to those owned by CalTrans, to the 37,000 unhoused folks to give them a place to stay.
- Provide sufficient paid sick leave to all workers to self-quarantine for up to 20 days at a time.
- Establish a small business support fund that will be available to small businesses and street vendors, and encompasses rent support and wage support for short term lay-offs and reductions in hours.
- Extend unemployment insurance over and above the 52 week standard period.
- Paid family leave for all workers to take care of family members who are sick, quarantined or children whose schools are closed.
- Establish strong anti-retaliation measures to protect renters and workers from being retaliated by employers and landlords after the state of emergency.
- Provide free and adequate medical resources to diagnose COVID-19 cases, and care for all patients.
- Cut back on military, prison, and police funding. Stop the wall, deactivate ICE, halt all ICE deportations and close the camps. Use the resource to expand medical care, food stamps and low-income housing support.

The City should make extraordinary efforts to ensure that all programs and resources are accessible to speakers of languages alongside with English and Spanish. Resources should be available in Chinese languages, Vietnamese, Khmer, Korean, and more. A special task force should be put in place to connect our community to these resources, because we have been on the front line of this crisis.

In the long term, we demand universal health care, universal basic income, and housing for all. The impending public health crisis highlights the fact that housing is an intrinsically public health issue. Housing and healthcare should not be privatized, and everyone should have enough to live and thrive.

We believe in creating networks of community care grounded in mutual aid. CCED is starting a mutual-aid fund to support low-wage workers, renters and small businesses and we invite our supporters and Chinatown stakeholders to contribute and join the effort. We will practice social distancing in our gatherings because we care for one another. We will never stop organizing with each other. We will continue to fight for Chinatown and other migrant, low-income communities. Furthermore, we support the demands led by our allies including Service Not Sweeps, NOlympicsKtown for All, Khmer Girls in Action, Los Angeles Tenants Union, Reclaiming Our Homes, LA CAN, Justice LA, Black Lives Matter, Crenshaw Subway Coalition, Coast to Coast Chinatown Against Displacement, and Covid-19 Mutual Aid. Our community is resilient. Together we will build community power and survive this pandemic near and far.

With care and solidarity

All Chinatown Tenant Union including

970 Everett Tenant Association

Hillside Villa Tenant Association

770 Hill Place Tenant Association

651 Broadway Tenant Association

Bartlett Tenant Association

Metro at Chinatown Residents Organization (MACRO)

This list will be updated as organizations sign on.