

May 3, 2021

Governor J.B. Pritzker
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

James R. Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph, 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Governor Pritzker:

With the expedited passage of HB 2877 in both chambers, we request a swift bill signing of the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Act. HB 2877 passed the House with 73 votes and the Senate with 39 votes.

The bill protects tenants from the long-term consequences of eviction records, codifies certain provisions of the federally funded emergency rental assistance program that will be administered by Illinois during 2021, prohibits tenant screening companies from disseminating a sealed eviction court record and creates penalties for doing so, and temporarily halts foreclosure proceedings for homeowners and small landlords. In these uncertain times, no one should fear losing their home.

Signing the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Act into law as soon as possible is critical for renters, homeowners, and landlords impacted by the housing crisis caused by the pandemic because:

1. The mandatory and automatic eviction sealing provisions lose their effectiveness if they are signed into law after any state and/or federal eviction moratorium is lifted. We and others will continue to advocate for extension of the existing moratoriums for as long as they are needed to protect the public health. If the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Act is not signed into law before the moratorium expires, thousands of Illinois households will have an eviction filing on their record only because they lost income during the pandemic and were unable to pay rent. Having an eviction filing on your record is a significant obstacle to finding housing.

As a recent op-ed in the New York Times states, "Millions of Americans have fallen behind on rent during the Covid-19 pandemic, prompting the passage of eviction moratoriums and rental assistance plans. But as policymakers have

struggled to meet the needs of tenants and landlords, they've largely overlooked a crucial fact: The looming eviction crisis isn't just about falling behind on rent and losing one's home to eviction. It's also about the records of those events, captured in court documents and credit reports, that will haunt millions of Americans for years to come."¹

Depending on the model, the number of households at risk of eviction in Illinois is between 279,410 and 590,000. The estimate of select public costs of eviction related to homelessness are between \$2.6 billion and \$5.4 billion. Costs include emergency shelter, inpatient and emergency medical care, and child welfare services.²

2. Codifies certain provisions of the federally-funded emergency rental assistance program the State of Illinois will be administering during 2021. The provisions are intended to ensure that people with the lowest incomes and most severe housing needs are able to access the State of Illinois' share of the \$834.7 million in rent assistance to be available statewide, \$566.3 million.
3. Temporarily cancels foreclosure sales for homeowners and small landlords through July 31, 2021. This will give people, especially those without a federally-backed mortgage (who have no federal level protections), some additional time to work with their lenders to avoid foreclosure.

Expediting signage of the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Act will promote racial equity. Communities of color have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic and are the most likely to lose their housing as a result. Data collected through the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey for March 17, 2021 through March 29, 2021 found that overall 19% of renters in Illinois are behind on rent, with 11% of white households, 22% of Black households, and 40% of Latino/a/x households reporting being behind on rent. The pandemic has exacerbated housing affordability and access for communities of color. An eviction crisis is looming when the eviction moratorium is lifted.

We thank you for your efforts to keep Illinoisians safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Expedited signage of the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Act will help mitigate the long-term consequences of the pending eviction crisis. Please contact XXX if you have any questions.

¹ *Losing a Home Because of the Pandemic Is Hard Enough. How Long Should It Haunt You?* Barbara Kiviat and Sara Sternberg Greene. New York Times. January 7, 2021. <https://nyti.ms/35mc07D>.

² *Costs of COVID-19 Evictions*. National Low Income Housing Coalition and Innovation for Justice (i4J) Program at University of Arizona College of Law. November 2020. Available at <https://bit.ly/costevict>.

Sincerely,

Housing Action Illinois
Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing
Shriver Center on Poverty Law

[Other Signers]

cc: Representative Delia Ramirez
Senator Omar Aquino
Sol Flores
Mercedes Mondragon
Tiffany Newbern
Ramon Gardenhire