

April 23, 2020

Fresno City Council
2600 Fresno St.
Fresno, CA 93721

RECEIVED
2020 APR 22 A 9:40
CITY OF FRESNO
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

RE: Agenda Item ID 20-00493

Dear Council President Arias and Councilmembers:

We, the undersigned organizations, religious institutions, and entities, appreciate the City's efforts and leadership thus far in enacting emergency orders and protective measures responding to residents' urgent needs resulting from COVID-19 impacts. While we can only hope this pandemic will soon pass, the unknown leaves thousands of Fresno City households in limbo and in immediate need of government support and intervention from the local to the federal level. As over three million Californians have already filed for unemployment, countless more are excluded ineligible to apply. Fresno residents, in particular, are especially vulnerable to adverse impacts of this pandemic when already faced with the challenges of housing instability with below-average median household incomes; a large undocumented population that is ineligible to receive public benefits; and a majority of households that are rent-burdened. To further protect the health, safety, and welfare of Fresno City residents, **we urge the Council to support and pass ID 20-00493 with the following additional modifications:**

- Align this order with the Judicial Council's rules and timeline adopted April 6, 2020. This will lessen the confusion of various dates, timelines, and general information that is being shared across various media outlets. Additionally, this alignment will also support Fresno Courts as they too prepare themselves for a post-COVID-19 reality.
- Modify section (g)(4) to allow tenants up to twelve months to repay back any rent. With an average rent of \$1,136 and an average salary of \$17.10 before taxes, the reality is that missing even 1 or 2 months of rent can drastically set a family back¹². With nearly a third of Fresno families living in poverty prior to the pandemic, we can only expect this number to increase drastically even after the state of emergency is lifted. Even once the state of emergency is lifted, it will be hard for countless families to repay their past-due rent within the six month time period. The unfortunate reality is that many will have to compete with dozens of other people for the same job, making it harder to find a job right away. A twelve-month window to repay any missed rent will ensure landlords get paid what

¹ <https://www.rentjungle.com/average-rent-in-fresno-rent-trends>

² <https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Location=Fresno-CA/Salary>

they're owed and tenants can have reasonable payments, all while stabilizing Fresno's rental housing market and preventing evictions.

- Align section (g)(3) requiring a tenant to provide documentation to Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-37-20 or at least extend the timeframe to no less than thirty (30) days for a tenant to provide documentation. As religious institutions and organizations who have spent countless hours working with Fresno City tenants, it has come to our realization that despite the emergency protections and best efforts to inform tenants of their rights, many are still unaware or unsure of these measures. Alignment with the Governor's Emergency Order or offering a thirty-day time period will give tenants a chance to inform themselves of their rights and responsibilities, and obtain adequate documentation for their landlord. During an already stressful time when many businesses are slow to respond, many tenants will have difficulty obtaining documentation and will have added stress worsened by the short timeframe. An additional twenty-day extension in no way rids a tenant of their responsibility and continues to provide the landlord the documentation required.
- Modify section (i) in the Executive Order 2020-12 directing the City Manager to identify funds and create a COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund to include specific funding for a housing assistance program. Monies for this fund can and should be allocated from federal, state, and local dollars such as the federal stimulus approved last month. This specific funding will support tenants who will continue to struggle to catch up on their rent payments once the State of Emergency is lifted. With over half of the City's residents being renters, nearly 70% are rent-burdened, and many living paycheck to paycheck, losing their job or losing hours is a situation many will not be able to recover from. Having some sort of funding assistance, similar to the small-business loan program, will support tenants and facilitate the City's economy to rebound faster and stronger.

Thank you for consideration of these comments. In order to continue protecting all residents of Fresno, we urge you to adopt our recommendations as these issues have been raised most immediate. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact us at gelenes@leadershipcounsel.org.

In solidarity,

Grecia Elenes
Leadership Counsel for Justice and
Accountability

Lawrence Chisom

St. Matthew Baptist Church

Fr. José Alexander Gaitán Montes, CMF
St. Anthony Claret Catholic Church Pastor

Rev. Akiko Miyake-Stoner
United Methodist Clergy

Pstr. Jonathan A. Villalobos.
Bethany Inner City Church.

Rev. Karen Stoffers-Pugh, Clergy
Wesley UMC

Rev. Deacon Nancy Key
St. James Episcopal Cathedral, Clergy

Rev. Terrance Goodpasture, Deacon,
St. James Episcopal Cathedral.

Jim Grant, Social Justice Director
Roman Catholic Diocese of Fresno

The Rev. Canon Anna Carmichael, Ph.D.
Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin

Sukaina Hussain
CAIR Central California

Rabbi Laura Novak Winer, Ed.D.,
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of
Religion

Karla Arana
Faith in the Valley

Kimberly McCoy
Fresno Building Healthy Communities

Artie Padilla
Every Neighborhood Partnership

Keith Bergthold
Fresno Metro Ministries

Margarita Rocha
Centro la Familia

Dr. Tania L. Pacheco-Werner, Fresno
Researcher

Chione Muñoz Flegal
Policy Link

Maria de Socorro Santillan
Planned Parenthood Mar Monte

Lucila Ortiz
Californians for Justice

Kevin Hamilton
Central California Asthma Collaborative

Genoveva Islas
Cultiva la Salud

Mike Espinoza
GO Fresno

Anthony Armour
Neighborhood Industries

Sher Moua
Youth Leadership Institute

Oralia Maceda
Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo
Indigena Oaxaqueño

Luis Ojeda
ACLU Foundation of Northern California

Jean Hays
Women's International League for Peace &
Freedom, Fresno Branch