



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember David Cohen

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 6/22/2021

Approved

Date: 6/22/2021

SUBJECT: Enact an Urgency and Companion Ordinance Implementing an Eviction Moratorium Through August 31, 2021 for Tenants Financially Impacted by COVID-19

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept the recommendations in the June 18, 2021 Memo from Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers Peralez and Arenas.
2. Direct EOC to provide information on the state's COVID-19 Rent Relief program at EOC-operated vaccination sites, including who qualifies for the program, how to prove eligibility, and how to apply for relief. Resources should be provided in multiple languages, including Spanish and Vietnamese.
3. Direct PRNS to provide similar resources at community centers and libraries.

BACKGROUND

Today, San José stands at a crossroads. Plummeting case rates and one of the highest percentages of residents vaccinated in the country have put the worst of the pandemic behind us, and our city is at last emerging from a year and a half of shelter in place, remote schooling for children, and social isolation. This is a momentous opportunity to ensure that our community comes out of this crisis more united and stronger than ever, and that nobody is left behind in the recovery process.

To do that, we have to recognize that, despite our success in fighting the pandemic and getting our residents vaccinated, our low-income families are still reeling from the economic damage caused by the pandemic. Now is not the time to pull the rug out from under them by making it more difficult for them to stay housed and avoid being evicted. I applaud Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers Arenas and Peralez for acknowledging this reality in their memo, and I fully support their recommendations on maintaining current documentation and rent repayment requirements, as well as calling on staff to return to Council with guidance on the possibility of extending the moratorium further.

To truly address the lingering economic impacts of the pandemic on working families, however, we also need to step up our efforts to connect residents to rental assistance. We are fortunate in

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California to have a robust program of nearly \$3 billion dedicated to providing relief to renters who have lost their jobs, who have taken on debt, who have seen their wages fall due to hours cut at work. However, that money simply is not reaching the people who need it quickly enough. Many residents do not know how to access rent relief, or have found the process too complicated and difficult; some don't even know relief is available to them at all. We also know that those areas associated with low vaccination rates also tend to be the areas that have experienced the most economic hardship due to the pandemic, the areas where residents most urgently need to be connected with rental assistance. As such, I recommend that the Council adopt the memo from Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers Arenas and Peralez, while also directing city staff to provide information on the state's COVID-19 Rent Relief program and multilingual, easy-to-understand resources on how to access the program at all of our vaccination sites. As our libraries and community centers reopen, I recommend that our outreach and efforts to connect residents to rent relief be extended to these sites as well, given their importance to working families throughout San José.

Our city is at a turning point in our recovery from the pandemic. We have an opportunity to build back better, to ensure all communities are included in the recovery process and nobody is left behind. It is an opportunity we cannot afford to squander.