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TENANT ADVOCATES VICTORIOUS; COUNTY EXTENDS EVICTION MORATORIUM UNTIL 2021

In making its eviction ban one of the longest and strongest in the United States, Alameda County will prevent a tidal wave of evictions and protect the low-income Black and Brown families most impacted by COVID-19 from losing their homes during the pandemic.

On Tuesday, August 4, 2020, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors heeded the cries of tenants and housing justice advocates and voted to extend the county-wide moratorium on evictions through December 31, 2020. The moratorium, which had previously been set to expire on September 30, 2020, comes at a moment when thousands of unemployed county residents have lost their emergency federal unemployment benefits and follows a month in which new COVID-19 cases hit their highest point ever in Alameda County.

“The very people who have borne the brunt of the Bay Area’s housing crisis for years - African-American families, undocumented people, seniors on fixed incomes and low-wage workers - are the ones facing the highest rates of COVID-19 *and* feeling the most acute impacts of the recession,” said Linda Yu, Interim Housing Director at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC). “If this vote had gone the other way, we’d be seeing a huge spike in evictions, in people undertaking dangerous out-of-state moves, and in homelessness.”

Thanks to the extension, which goes into effect on September 5, 2020, tenants will be protected from all eviction notices served or unlawful detainer complaints filed from March 24, 2020, through at least December 31, 2020. The moratorium will continue until 60 days after the Alameda County public health emergency is lifted, but will not end before December 31, 2020.

Crucial as the extension is, advocates say moratoriums alone won’t be enough to prevent massive displacement and debt for families at risk of losing their housing.

“We commend the Board of Supervisors for extending these protections through the end of 2020, so that tenants can focus on their health and on establishing stability for their children during school closures without the constant fear of eviction,” said Pedro Viramontes, Housing Staff Attorney and Clinical Supervisor at EBCLC. “Now, the State of California needs to step up with transformational policy changes that create lasting housing stability for the Black and Brown communities that have been devastated by redlining, the housing crisis, and now COVID-19.”

“In fighting for and securing these crucial protections, Alameda County renters and housing justice supporters are sending the message that we won’t go back to ‘business as usual,’” said Sabyl Landrum, Housing Staff Attorney and Clinical Supervisor at EBCLC. “We’re calling on our public officials to implement unprecedented solutions to unprecedented suffering, including rent cancellation for impacted tenants.”

As EBCLC Executive Director Zoë Polk notes, preventing eviction is more than a matter of shelter- it’s foundational to public health. “This eviction moratorium is crucial to mitigating the health impacts of displacement,” Polk said. “Too often, the stress of unstable housing results in disruptions to employment, social networks, education, and the receipt of social service benefits. Because of our holistic advocacy and support services, EBCLC is positioning our clients to do more than survive, but to realize thriving, healthy, and dignified lives.”

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The [East Bay Community Law Center](http://ebclc.org) (EBCLC) was founded in 1988 by Berkeley Law students committed to addressing the intractable social determinants that contribute to poverty and inequity. Today, the organization operates 8 nationally-recognized anti-poverty clinics that provide free legal services to over 8,000 Alameda County households and train over 150 law students annually, while advancing policy solutions to disrupt systemic racism.