

February 1, 2021

Joint Finance & Appropriations Committee
Idaho State Legislature
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720

Members of the Committee,

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully urge you to approve in its entirety the \$164 million in Emergency Rental Assistance funds allocated to Idaho by the federal coronavirus relief package. Eviction threatens the health of Idaho's families and communities during this public health crisis, and your affirmative vote can prevent housing needs from turning into widespread evictions and homelessness.

Emergency rental assistance is needed now more than ever to ensure no one loses their home due to the coronavirus or during the following economic recovery. Prior to the pandemic, the gap between increasing rental prices, stagnant wage growth, and unmet housing demand meant renters in Idaho already struggled to find affordable homes. Now, the pandemic is compounding previous barriers to affordable homes as necessary public health measures resulted in widespread unemployment and financial instability that still impacts Idaho's renters today and into the foreseeable future.

Rental assistance is an investment in the health of Idaho's economy and its residents. A recent [report released by the Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy](#) found that \$118.5 million to \$148.5 million in rental assistance will be needed to ensure every Idaho family most severely impacted by the economic crisis can be stably housed through Fiscal Year 2021. The report also estimates that eviction-related homelessness occurring as a result of lack of access to rental assistance in Idaho could cost Idaho taxpayers between \$172 million and \$412 million.

As the relationship between housing and healthcare becomes more apparent during this time, it is essential that Idaho's renters with modest incomes have access to the resources they need to remain safely and stably housed. These resources play a pivotal role in ensuring everyone in our communities have the same opportunity to maintain recommended hygiene practices and self-isolate in the event of an infection to slow the spread of the disease. These actions are critical to ensuring the health and safety of our state as a whole.

Rental assistance will also keep property owners and landlords in Idaho financially whole. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) enacted a federal eviction moratorium that protects most renters from eviction for unpaid rent through the end of March 2021. The moratorium requires renters to pay as much of their rent as possible, but unpaid rent continues to accumulate. Rental assistance will play a critical role in maintaining the financial stability of those who rely on rents for income, while simultaneously ensuring thousands of Idaho renters do not face eviction when the legal protections are lifted.

Our state's leaders can choose to protect the health and lives of Idahoans by ensuring the state has its own rental assistance fund for Idahoans struggling to stay in their homes. Families, property owners,

and community organizations are all working hard to keep people housed. Please approve the full Emergency Rental Assistance allocation now to ensure these efforts are maximized for our public health and our economy.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kendra Knighten, Policy Associate
Idaho Asset Building Network



Christine Tiddens, Director
Idaho Voices for Children



Rebecca Lemmons
Saint Alphonus Health System



Michael Baker, CEO
Heritage Health



Yvonne Ketchum Ward, CEO
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Catherine M. Perusse, Board Member
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Karen Vauk, President and CEO
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Gayle Woods, Chair of Conveners
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Anna Almerico, Director
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Kevin Bailey, CEO
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Bill Maikranz, President & CEO
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Larry Riley, Executive Director
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