



Investment • Access • Opportunity

June 30, 2020

Governor Walz, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan, Commissioner Ho,

As housing policy advocates, organizers, lawyers, non-profit developers, renters and members of communities impacted by inequities in our housing system, **we write to you today to express our strongest opposition to any new exemptions to the eviction moratorium.**

Equity in Place (EIP) is a diverse group of strategic partners from organizations led by people of color and housing advocacy organizations. Our work is centered around an understanding of the legacy and ongoing impact of structural racism on development and growth in the Twin Cities region and how it has undermined our communities' access to housing, property ownership, and wealth building opportunities. We see the connection between the legacy of racism and disinvestment in communities of color and the uprisings in our state and nation following the murder of George Floyd and believe leaders must actively combat ongoing impacts of racism throughout all systems. The only way we can begin to address our regional and state inequities is by bringing the expertise of impacted communities into decision making processes in meaningful and powerful ways.

As you know, housing justice is racial justice and we have appreciated your **implementation of a statewide evictions moratorium** at the beginning of the COVID crisis as a way to protect renters against displacement and losing their homes in the midst of a major economic downturn. We are also aware that your administration is under pressure from well-resourced landlord and developer interests to relax and create a broader set of exemptions to the moratorium. This would subject a large number of renters to the threat of eviction, who will be faced with limited resources for rental assistance or suspension. **These actions, especially during this global pandemic and current economy, would lead to massive displacement, homelessness, and public health impacts.**

Many Equity in Place partners are on the ground in communities being most impacted by the intersections of COVID, the downturn in the economy, and housing instability. **As a coalition, we understand these impacts and make the following requests of your administration:**

- **No additional exemptions to the evictions moratorium.** We are aware of the consideration of to exempt "material breaches of lease" as grounds for eviction. As many legal allies have shared with you there is a great risk that such an exemption poses to renters who have been unable to make rent payments due to our current economic situation. Many of our community members would be made at risk for eviction for even the most minor "material breach" real or perceived, which could be abused to kick people out of their homes for non-payment of rent. Creating exceptions to the moratorium will undermine the moratorium as a whole and exacerbate the public health crises of homelessness and COVID.

- **Recognize that the Minnesota Multihousing Association (MHA) is no friend of renters, Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color (BIPOC).** They have been long opponents of meaningful and reasonable tenants rights policies at the local, county, and state level and repeatedly use dog whistle racist narratives about renters to drum up fear and opposition to efforts towards housing justice. They often position themselves as speaking for the interests of renters but they are wholly unrepresentative of renters and the cultural and geographic communities that a disproportionate number of renters come from. When you engage with or hear from them, we request that you spend an equitable share of your time engaging directly with renters, and housing justice advocates and organizers.
- **Extend the evictions moratorium in place through the end of the year (2020) and through the end of the economic crisis created by COVID-19.** We understand that procedurally, the Governor cannot extend beyond the peacetime emergency, but we do not believe that the overlapping set of crises that our state and region face will be over anytime in the near future. This is especially true for BIPOC communities, who were already facing a housing crisis before COVID and have been most negatively impacted in both health and economic outcomes. More broadly, we know both from our community wisdom as well as research data that suggests the potential for massive evictions based on the backlog of unpaid rent. Aspen Institute [research](#)¹ estimates that more than 277,000 people in Minnesota could be facing eviction by the end of September should the eviction moratorium be allowed to end.
- **Make rental assistance available to people who are at risk of losing their homes on the scale necessary to avert mass displacement.** The pressure on renters and homeowners will only increase when the additional unemployment benefits disappear at the end of July and without a commitment of substantial resources to protect renters, many people will not only have an eviction on their record, but also unpaid rent debt and decreased income. This will make it essentially impossible for people who are evicted now to find a place to live in the future and for years to come.
- Finally, we request a **response to our letter** from both the Governor's office and from Minnesota Housing leadership.

Thank you for your consideration of the requests we have put forward. We are committed to continue to publicly show support for the eviction moratorium and other progressive actions that this administration might take to support renters and our communities. We are in communication with and are planning to meet with members of the Governor's staff and Minnesota Housing and to continue this dialogue.

Sincerely,
Equity in Place

1- aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/20-million-renters-are-at-risk-of-eviction

Equity in Place is convened by the Alliance and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. Members include:

African Career Education and Resource (ACER) | Alliance for Metropolitan Stability | Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of MN | Community Stabilization Project | Frogtown Neighborhood Association | Harrison Neighborhood Association | Hope Community | Housing Justice Center | Jewish Community Action | Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers | MN STEP (Standing Together to End Poverty) | Native American Community Development Institute | New American Development Center | Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza MN | Urban Homeworks | West Side Community Organization