

A RESOLUTION

24-312

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

December 7, 2021

To declare the sense of the Council that the U.S. Treasury should act expeditiously to provide the District with additional emergency rental assistance funds and to declare that the Mayor of the District of Columbia should use local funding options to prevent an imminent eviction crisis by increasing the balance of the District's Emergency Rental Assistance Program to enable the program to support low-income renters through the remainder of the Fiscal Year as the District recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Sense of the Council Eviction Prevention Resolution of 2021".

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

- (1) Every resident of the District of Columbia deserves safe, stable, and affordable housing.
- (2) The District currently faces an affordable housing crisis, which has contributed to the displacement of more than 20,000 Black residents in the past decade.
- (3) Renters are an integral part of the District's communities, diversity, and economy, making up 59% of the District's housing market.
- (4) Even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 1/2 of the District's renters were rent-burdened and 1/4 of renters were severely rent burdened, spending more than 1/2 their income on housing.
- (5) People of color are more likely to rent their homes and be rent burdened, with 65% of Black households in the District being renters and 70% of Latino households being renters, and with 30% and 28% experiencing severe rent burdens, respectively.
- (6) The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated housing and economic instability by disproportionately displacing residents from low-wage jobs primarily held by people of color.
- (7) Throughout the pandemic, the District has held the highest Black unemployment rate and the largest Black-white unemployment ratio in the nation.
- (8) The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have disparate impacts on the health of Black and brown residents, saddling more residents of color with medical debt from COVID-19 treatment.

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(9) The combined economic and health impacts of COVID-19 exacerbated conditions where a high number of renters of color fell behind on housing payments leaving them at risk of displacement with the eviction moratorium lifted and federal rental assistance being depleted.

(10) The household pulse survey conducted by Stout Risius Ross, LLC estimates that 15% of District rental households were behind on their rent as of October 11, 2021, representing as many as 39,000 renters being behind on housing bills.

(11) The survey estimates that 33% of Black households are behind on rent compared to 0.6% of white households.

(12) STAY DC has successfully assisted more than 20,000 households to date, yet thousands more remain in need of assistance, and needs will persist throughout Fiscal Year 2022.

(13) The U.S. Treasury has cautioned the District that additional federal rental assistance reallocated from Emergency Rental Assistance underspending in other states may not be available until March 2022.

(14) The depletion of STAY DC funds combined with a lapse in additional assistance from federal sources poses disproportionate and imminent eviction threats to Black, Latino, and lower income households, which could lead to their permanent displacement from the District.

(15) The District has significant financial resources available to prevent an eviction crisis while additional federal aid is pending, including contingency cash reserves, unallocated Fiscal Year 2022 revenue, and other funds available within the District's operating budget.

(16) The Mayor has the ability to initiate spending of local resources to respond in emergencies such as this.

(17) Widespread evictions while COVID-19 still impacts the District would worsen public health, economic recovery, and housing displacement disparities.

(18) The Council stands ready to work with the Mayor to meet the needs of the District's renters and landlords to ensure a strong and equitable recovery.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that:

(1) Rental assistance funds are necessary to prevent evictions and stabilize both tenant and landlord finances.

(2) It is necessary for the U.S. Treasury to provide the District of Columbia with additional emergency rental assistance as soon as possible.

(3) It is necessary for the Mayor to identify funding that ensures the District's locally managed Emergency Rental Assistance Program ("ERAP") has sufficient resources to meet tenant needs through the remainder of Fiscal Year 2022, including while the District awaits allocations of additional federal assistance.

(4) The Mayor should prioritize eviction diversion funds for residents who are scheduled for eviction or who have writs pending, and that the Mayor should encourage all

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tenants eligible for ERAP to apply for rental assistance as soon as possible.

Sec. 4. The Council shall transmit copies of this resolution, upon its adoption, to the Mayor, the Interim Chief Financial Officer of the District of Columbia, the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, and to Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.