

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 19, 2021

Ron Klain
Chief of Staff
President-elect Joseph Biden
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C., U.S.

Dear Mr. Klain,

Congratulations to president-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris on their historic victory. I am excited to work with them and their team to build back better following the calamity of COVID-19. In that spirit, I write to highlight an acute housing issue their administration will likely face as soon as they assume office. Emergency rental assistance funding and guidance has yet to be issued by the outgoing administration to state and local governments. The Department of Treasury must disburse these funds and issue guidance quickly to prevent a housing displacement crisis. Many in my district are facing eviction during this pandemic and require the swift intervention of the incoming administration to avert a potentially devastating outcome.

As you are aware, on December 21, Congress passed an emergency relief package in response to the ongoing COVID-19 economic downturn. Included in the bill is \$25 billion in emergency rental assistance and an extension of an eviction moratorium. Of that \$25 billion, Missouri is slated to receive over \$408 million. States and localities with populations of 200,000 or more, including Jackson County, Clay County, and Kansas City, Missouri, will be responsible for distributing the rental assistance. In early January, the U.S. Treasury Department released some guidance on eligibility and required the completion of an online form for eligible recipients by January 12, 2021. However, it remains unclear when funds will be distributed, how much localities will receive and, what framework states and localities will be required to adhere to in the disbursement of funds. These are among the most important points that require clarity if this program is to operate effectively.

This act of clarity is even more urgent as some local courts, including some in my district, continue to pursue evictions in conflict with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) moratorium. I informed the Trump Administration's Justice Department, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and CDC of this shortcoming that required intervention months ago. I highlighted that, possibly due to insufficient specificity in policy guidance or misreading/misinterpretation by jurisdictions, some courts have inconsistently interpreted the CDC order allowing evictions during the pandemic to persist. I urged HUD to work with the CDC and DOJ to devise a mechanism to address the deficiencies in the order. According to Princeton University's Eviction Lab, from the date the CDC order took effect through October 17, there were 20,523 evictions filed in the 22 cities monitored by the project's researchers. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was forced to bring a lawsuit on behalf of renters in Kansas City, Missouri, to prevent vulnerable families from being displaced during this pandemic. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration did not sufficiently act to address this

problem. Where they have failed, I am eager to work with the incoming administration to ensure it will succeed.

I know many issues require the attention of the incoming administration. However, I urge the incoming team to prioritize this necessary rental assistance and guidance for states and localities. I am confident that President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris will ensure dawn will break for those in need of safe and secure housing during this difficult time.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emanuel Cleaver, II". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, prominent "E" at the beginning and a long, sweeping underline.

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress