

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 1, 2020

Michael L. Parson
Governor
P.O. Box 720
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Governor Parson,

As you are well aware, Missouri is in the midst of a surge of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and among the top 10 states with the highest number of unpaid mortgages and rents in the country.¹ In conversations with federal officials, I learned we are on the cusp of an “eviction tsunami” unless there is swift and meaningful action. I am very pleased that the Missouri Emergency Rental Arrears Program, funded by the CARES Act, may be able to provide the kind of emergency relief to families I know could avert an eviction crisis. However, I understand that this program may not be rolled out in time to help those who may need it most. I know your intervention in the rollout of this important program could expedite its implementation and avert this crisis within our state. I want to take this opportunity to urge your personal involvement and stand ready to assist you in any way necessary to ensure this program’s success.

There has been a 300% surge in the number of calls from families on the verge of losing their homes to Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri.² Since early March, over 3,200 eviction cases have been filed in St. Louis³ and over 2,400 cases have been filed in the Kansas City area.⁴ Additionally, a number of eviction filings have been initiated in Boone, Greene and Jackson counties. In the face of this crisis, Congress passed the CARES Act, which provided millions in homelessness prevention funds to prevent individual and family displacement in the midst of this highly communicable pandemic. I was very pleased to learn that your agency, the Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC), used CARES Act ESG homelessness prevention funds to create the Missouri Emergency Rental Arrears Program. This program will make one-time payments of up to 6 months of rental arrears to landlords on behalf of tenants. I understand MHDC intends to use most of the funding for this program and the remaining will be available through the non-profit network. This could do a great deal to prevent families already in the eviction pipeline or on the verge of imminent displacement from being kicked out of their home during this pandemic.

Unfortunately, I understand that there is significant concern that MHDC’s program may not be rolled out in time to rescue the hundreds of Missouri families in the eviction pipeline and that it may take intervention from your office to close this time gap. I have every confidence that you can leverage the important tools within the state’s infrastructure to meet this moment and help

¹ <https://dsnews.com/daily-dose/11-02-2020/9-9-million-expected-to-miss-housing-payments-2>

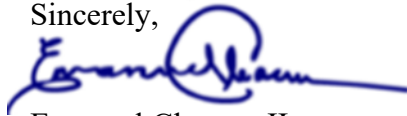
² http://www.stlamerican.com/business/business_news/there-could-be-a-tsunami-of-evictions/article_40ccbf12-1c68-11eb-a965-8751464cbfcc.html

³ <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/st-louis-mo/>

⁴ <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/kansas-city-mo/>

save these families on the verge of eviction. I would like to volunteer my office to help work with you in expediting this effort. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Emanuel Cleaver, II". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "E" and "C".

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress