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LDF Calls on State and Local Governments to Address the Many Challenges Associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global and national crisis that requires a unified and concerted response to protect the life, health, and safety of all Americans. Amidst this crisis, it is especially critical to remember that those who are the most vulnerable require particular attention and concern. Indeed, low-income members of American society, many of whom are people of color, will continue to experience staggering economic instability unless immediate actions at all levels of government are taken to curb this outcome. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) calls on state and local officials to take immediate steps to ensure that those who are already disenfranchised do not experience even further socioeconomic hardship stemming from this crisis.

“State and local governments are fully empowered to implement measures that will protect low-income Americans from catastrophic economic dislocation,” said Sherrilyn Ifill, LDF’s President and Director-Counsel. “We are gratified that a number have done so already. Ending evictions, foreclosures, and utility shut-offs are matters that lie squarely within the authority of governors, mayors, and local officials. We are calling on all state and local officials to act immediately to implement commonsense, desperately-needed measures to protect struggling families.”

At the state level, officials should immediately enact measures that promote health and welfare, and that will ease the financial burden families are confronting due to lay-offs, reduced pay, inadequate medical coverage, and lack of paid sick leave. These measures should include an expansion of Medicaid, a moratorium on the processing of evictions and foreclosures in state courts, and a suspension of sales taxes on groceries and other household necessities.

Municipal and county officials can play an important role in ameliorating the burden on families as well. We call on mayors and other local officials to announce a moratorium on any municipal services penalties and fines, including water and electricity turn-offs, municipal property liens for unpaid debts, and tax foreclosures and tax sales. City governments should also freeze rates for municipal services throughout the duration of this pandemic to help ensure affordability – and local sheriffs’ offices must temporarily halt the execution of evictions to guarantee that no one is removed from their home for the foreseeable future. Moreover, local governments should prioritize releasing non-violent offenders from jail to help diminish the number of individuals who are susceptible to a potential COVID-19 outbreak while incarcerated.

While [several states and cities](#) have already taken steps to enact some of these measures, far more action is needed. A complex, multi-faceted crisis requires nuanced solutions from all levels of government. State and local officials must face this challenge head on and implement these policies before low-income Americans face even more dire consequences resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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