



March 23, 2020

Sent via email

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
United States Conference of Mayors
1620 I St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Cochran:

As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads in severity nationwide, elected officials at all levels of government—federal, state and local— must work to create a unified and concerted response to ensure the continued health, economic stability and wellbeing of all Americans. Mayors and local elected officials have particular authority to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as well as to thwart potential socio-economic catastrophes stemming from the national crisis.

The NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) was founded in 1940 by Thurgood Marshall. It has been an entirely separate organization from the NAACP since 1957. Through litigation, advocacy, and public education, LDF seeks structural changes to expand democracy, eliminate disparities, and achieve racial justice in a society that fulfills the promise of equality for all Americans. LDF's mission has always been transformative: to achieve racial justice, equality, and an inclusive society.

Since last week, LDF has called on mayors to take two immediate steps to ensure that Americans do not experience further socioeconomic hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures are:

- Impose a moratorium on utility (water and electricity) turn-offs for 90 days;



- Halt the execution of evictions to guarantee that no one is removed from their home during the COVID-19 pandemic for 90 days.

Suspending these activities is critical to ensure the protection, health and safety of vulnerable Americans facing financial hardship during this pandemic. A number of jurisdictions have already issued full or partial moratoriums on evictions until further notice including: Burbank, San Francisco, and Pasadena, California; Miami-Dade and Orange County, Florida; and Las Vegas, Nevada.¹ But hundreds of thousands of struggling families still face the insecurity of utility turn-offs and evictions. We strongly encourage the Conference to act to encourage all mayors to adopt these common-sense humanitarian measures during this pandemic.

In addition, we urge mayors and other local officials to announce a moratorium on any municipal services penalties and fines, municipal property liens for unpaid debts, and tax foreclosures and tax sales. City governments must also freeze rates for municipal services throughout the duration of this pandemic to help ensure affordability. 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.

The long-term economic instability caused by COVID-19 will disproportionately affect low-income members of society unless all governments undertake immediate and substantive protective measures. Furthermore, as jobs are lost and hours are cut across the country, it is particularly important that these safeguards are enacted to ensure people can continue practicing social distancing. Ending evictions, foreclosures and utility shut offs as well as eliminating sales tax on household necessities will better enable people to maintain housing and protect themselves and their community from getting sick.

State and local officials across the country have already implemented some of the foregoing measures to protect residents of their states. Indeed, we are gratified

¹ *Tenant protection during the novel coronavirus outbreak*, Augmented (Mar. 12, 2020) <https://blog.augmented.com/renting-during-the-novel-coronavirus-outbreak/>



that a number of states have taken decisive steps to ensure the health, safety and well-being of their residents during this national crisis. It is critical that our nation's mayors demonstrate leadership in the protection of those who are most vulnerable during this pandemic.

We welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the critical importance of undertaking these measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sherrilyn A. Ifill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sherrilyn Ifill
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cc: Bryan K. Barnett, Mayor of Rochester Hills, MI - President
Greg Fischer, Mayor of Louisville, KY -Vice President Nan
Whaley, Mayor of Dayton, OH – Second Vice President