

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 1, 2020

The Honorable Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., M.D.
Secretary
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 Seventh Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Carson,

I write today to request additional information regarding the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) efforts to assist renters during the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis. Across the country, many individuals and families – especially those who have lost their jobs or had their pay cut during this crisis – are struggling to pay their rent. As state and local moratoriums on evictions are lifted in the days and weeks ahead, including today in my state of New Hampshire, it is more essential than ever that the Department continue to work with renters to ensure that they can maintain safe and stable rental housing.

In March, Congress passed and the President signed the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provided a temporary moratorium on evictions for renters in properties with federally-backed mortgages and properties that participate in federal housing programs. States and localities have also enacted varying eviction moratoriums in response to the COVID-19 crisis. As mentioned above, New Hampshire has implemented a moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent that will expire today, July 1, 2020.

Although the state and local aid provided by the CARES Act has provided significant assistance to renters, including through a \$35 million relief program in New Hampshire, it is clear that much more relief is needed, including prompt and effective action from HUD to prevent vulnerable renters from losing their homes. Toward that end, it is imperative that HUD ensure that all renters have access to the latest information about their rights under the federal protections passed by the CARES Act.

Moreover, given the ongoing economic downturn, I am seriously concerned that many of these renters will struggle to meet rent and back-rent obligations once eviction moratoriums end. In New Hampshire, estimates suggest that between 10 percent and 20 percent of renters have missed their payments, with concerns that these numbers will increase. Across the country, Census Bureau surveys in May showed that 21 percent of adults were not confident that they could pay next month's rent or mortgage on time.¹ To help resolve rental disputes and facilitate fair rent repayment plans that protect struggling renters, HUD should work to facilitate eviction prevention activities, including tenant-landlord mediations. Specifically, the Department should

¹ “Weekly Census Bureau Survey Provides Timely Info on Households During COVID-19 Pandemic.” United States Census Bureau. May 20, 2020. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/05/new-household-pulse-survey-shows-concern-over-food-security-loss-of-income.html>

explore implementing a program to help renters and landlords discuss rental payment options, such as the program that would be established by S. 2486, the Prevent Evictions Act.

In light of these ongoing challenges I would like answers to the following by July 15, 2020:

1. What measures is HUD taking to ensure that all renters have access to the information and resources they need to determine what evictions protections they are entitled to under federal law? Is HUD taking proactive steps to provide these resources to renters in states and localities with eviction moratoriums that are coming to an end?
2. What efforts has HUD made to facilitate discussions between tenants and landlords? As state and local eviction moratoriums end, is HUD planning to take any specific steps to encourage tenant-landlord mediation in order to resolve disputes about ongoing rental obligations or payment of back-rent? Has HUD considered implementing a specific program during the COVID-19 crisis to facilitate tenant-landlord mediation?
3. Are there any resources that HUD has made or will make available to renters to help them navigate and successfully discuss rent repayment plans with their landlords? If so, do these resources provide up-to-date information about the varying state and local eviction moratoriums across the country?

I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that renters in New Hampshire and across the country are able to maintain safe and stable housing, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

With every good wish,



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator