September 8, 2021

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor, District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

RE: STAY DC and Scheduled Evictions

Dear Mayor Bowser,

On Tuesday, a community-based organization (CBO) reached out to my office about the over 70 evictions scheduled to occur next week. The CBO is concerned that the current STAY DC process is not nimble enough to issue payments before these evictions occur even though federal guidelines permit this.

After receiving this information, my office reached out to Director Zeilinger’s office to set up a phone call to discuss potential solutions, including the establishment of a payment fund that could be administered by a CBO to make payments while the household’s application remains under review, something that is explicitly allowed by the latest guidance from the United States Department of Treasury. Such payments would immediately halt eviction proceedings.

However, even though the Department of Human Services (DHS) is in the thick of administering STAY DC, and is the agency responsible for emergency rental assistance and other programs to prevent or address homelessness, DHS is unable or unwilling to meet with me to address this crisis.

Where evictions are due solely to the non-payment of rent and STAY DC funds can be used to resolve the matter, this government must step in. I’m sure you agree. But close to 300 such evictions are now scheduled—over 70 next week—and you administration won’t help, and won’t even discuss this.

If DHS can’t make themselves available, I ask that you communicate to the Council—before the end of this week—what is being done to deploy our resources to address the scheduled evictions.

Sincerely,

Phil Mendelson