September 8, 2021

Chairman Phil Mendelson
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Chairman Mendelson –

I write in response to your letter to Mayor Bowser dated September 8, 2021, regarding STAY DC and scheduled evictions. The federal funding source for STAY DC cannot support rent arrearages incurred before April 2020, and the evictions set to resume on September 13 involve anyone who received a writ prior to the pandemic starting. Furthermore, it is important to note that while the STAY DC program is a critical component to the District’s ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not, nor is it intended to be, the one and only eviction prevention resource.

My office has been working closely with the Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA), the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), to prepare for the upcoming pre-pandemic evictions set to begin next week. An outline of efforts underway is attached to this letter.

As we discussed during the course of last week’s five-hour roundtable on STAY DC, community-based organizations (CBOs), including Housing Counseling Services, play an important role in supporting the STAY DC and ERAP programs. DHS provided approximately $14 million to six CBOs. DHS anticipates funding these CBOs at a similar level in FY22 and has determined that existing CBO resources are sufficient to meet the ERAP demand expected this month. This year, DHCD provided $8.3 million to 11 CBOs, and it has increased funding to $10 million for FY22.

Our team has worked tirelessly to invest in our residents the once-in-a-lifetime federal funding. The District of Columbia met the federal threshold for connecting residents to rental and utility support more than a month ahead of the program milestone, and we lead the nation in per capita investment of the federal emergency rental assistance funds. We are all in this together, and we must work together to help the residents who need us most.

Sincerely,

John Falcicchio
Deputy Mayor, Planning and Economic Development
Eviction Prevention Efforts Underway

as of September 8, 2021

OTA

- As the chief agency charged with advocating for and supporting tenants in the District, OTA receives information nearly daily from the U.S. Marshals office about scheduled evictions.
- The following day, OTA notifies tenants by mail about available resources, including ERAP, STAY DC, legal representation, moving supplies, etc.
- OTA’s communication follows information shared by the U.S. Marshal’s Office with tenants 21 days ahead of a scheduled eviction.
- As of today, 291 evictions are scheduled to occur between September 13 and October 1.
- OTA has offered their office to the courts as a satellite office for hearings
- Hiring additional attorneys to assist tenants, supported by a budget enhancement in FY22.

DHS

- DHS has developed a process with Housing Counseling Services (HCS) to help tenants address pre-pandemic evictions and arrears.
- HCS has been conducting outreach to residents on the eviction list, either with available contact information or by cross referencing DHS ERAP data.
- HCS completes ERAP application for residents that contact them for assistance for the pre-pandemic arrears and flag for DHS. Also will complete STAY application if they have arrearages incurred since April 2020 and flag for DHS for expedited processing.
- As of today, there are a total of thirteen (13) tenants scheduled to be evicted next week that have been in conversation with HCS. Nine (9) have already submitted ERAP applications, and there are additional applications are in process.
- Cross-referenced the entire list of residents who have received writs due to pre-pandemic arrears with current STAY DC applicants. Expedited processing for those applicants.
- DHS has designated two (2) call center staff to address application status questions for residents on the eviction list.
- By September 26, online STAY DC application will include a new question on evictions or existing writs by October to prioritize applications moving forward.
- Between now and October 1, HCS will send DHS a list of families that they contacted and the outstanding balance needed to cover to stop the eviction. ERAP and HPP providers will issue the check within 24-48 hours and upon receipt of the payment, HCS will squash the eviction. After October 1, HCS will use its local ERAP grant to cover similar costs.

Multiple

- DMPED, in coordination with OTA, DHCD and the Mayor’s Office of Policy, is developing a guide for tenants that highlights the various types of resources available. This guide will be available for dissemination in the coming weeks.