



DAVID E. RYU
COUNCILMEMBER, FOURTH DISTRICT

March 23, 2020

Mayor Eric Garcetti
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Garcetti,

In light of the decision to cancel tomorrow's City Council meeting due to public health concerns related to coronavirus (COVID-19), I ask that you take immediate action on two critical pieces of legislation that require emergency action.

I am asking you to institute an immediate freeze on any rent increases or late fees, for residential and commercial tenants, as well as a freeze on utility bill increases for the duration of the crisis, capping utility charges for customers at their most recent bill amount prior to the beginning of the crisis. Rents will be coming due for many Angelenos on April 1st and utility bills not long thereafter, and we need action now.

The closure of non-essential businesses and the issuance of the "Safer at Home" Emergency Order are necessary to stem the spread of the virus, but the widespread loss of income that results will cause some of our most vulnerable residents to fall behind on payments for basic services including water, gas, internet, phone service and electricity, thereby incurring more debt. This will be particularly devastating to low and moderate-income Angelenos. Working people across California are facing lay-offs and struggling to pay rent and buy basic necessities. With more than 40 percent of households in Los Angeles County spending over 30 percent of their income on rent and struggling to meet basic needs, and more than 60 percent of households with children struggling to meet basic needs, it is critical that we provide immediate relief and make every effort to safeguard our local, regional and state economies in the long-run.

Tourism, the retail trade, accommodation and food services, the arts and entertainment industries, and manufacturing have been particularly hard hit. The extent of the damage will depend on how quickly the virus is contained, the steps authorities take to contain it, how much economic support governments are willing to deploy during the pandemic's immediate impact and aftermath, and our ability to free up consumer spending.

I am including the moving clauses of these two motions that are unable to be introduced and I ask you to take immediate executive action under the emergency declaration to implement them:

1. I THEREFORE MOVE that the Housing and Community Investment Department, with the assistance of the City Attorney and City Administrative Officer, be instructed to implement a freeze on rent increases for all residential and commercial tenants in the City of Los Angeles, effective until six months after the end of the emergency declaration and retroactive to the Mayor's implementation of the "COVID-19 Guidelines" Order which went into effect March 12, 2020, and call on the State to lift any legal barriers that would need to be suspended in order to effectuate the freeze.
2. I THEREFORE MOVE that the LADWP Board of Commissioners and LADWP staff be requested to immediately prepare and present an Ordinance implementing a temporary cap on utility charges for residential and commercial customers, pegged to the amount of a customer's most recent bill prior to the effective date of the Mayor's first "COVID-19 Guidelines" Order which went into place March 12, 2020, to be transmitted for Council's consideration.

I FURTHER MOVE that the LADWP Board of Commissioners and LADWP staff be requested to prepare and present an Ordinance implementing a moratorium on LADWP fines, fees or other costs associated with non-payment due to COVID-19 impacts until the end of the emergency declaration, and allow customers up to 12 months to repay unpaid utility bills and/or the difference between charges paid and usage during the emergency declaration, to be transmitted for Council's consideration.

On behalf of the majority of Angelenos who are renters and the millions of Los Angeles ratepayers, I implore you to take immediate action.

Sincerely,



David E. Ryu
Councilmember, City of Los Angeles, District Four