



DAVID E. RYU
COUNCILMEMBER, FOURTH DISTRICT

April 23, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Urgent Request to Suspend the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act

Dear Governor Newsom,

Throughout this unprecedented coronavirus crisis, you have acted swiftly and decisively, and your actions have saved the lives of thousands of Californians. Now, as we approach the May 1 rental collection date for millions of California's renters, I am asking you to exercise your executive authority to suspend all or part of the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act.

In Los Angeles, thousands of renters are deprived of critical protections because they do not live in rent-stabilized housing. At any moment, these tenants can find themselves on the back end of a substantial rent increase. During this crisis, when an estimated 55% of Los Angeles County residents are unemployed, governments at all levels must act to prevent an onslaught of renters falling into homelessness due to rent increases. We need Costa-Hawkins to be suspended for the duration of this pandemic to protect renters from an increase in rent when so many are struggling to make ends meet.

Since the onset of this crisis, my office has heard from many constituents who are afraid of losing their housing or falling into unmanageable debt. The Los Angeles City Council has strengthened the existing eviction protections to keep people in their homes during this crisis. Mayor Eric Garcetti has implemented a rent increase freeze for our City's rent-stabilized units. However, this freeze does not apply to the thousands of tenants residing in non-rent stabilized housing. In a meeting of the Los Angeles City Council on April 22, our City Attorney argued that Costa-Hawkins prevents us from freezing rent increases on non-rent stabilized units, even during a statewide emergency. A suspension of all or part of Costa-Hawkins would make it absolutely clear that cities in California are able to protect their residents from rent increases during this crisis.

This coronavirus shows no bounds in who gets infected, and the impacts of the economic fallout are no different for tenants in non-rent stabilized housing. We need to help everyone in our State stay safe at home, but we can't do that if we do not address their housing insecurity.

On March 16, 2020, when you issued Executive Order N-28-20 limiting evictions in California, you stated: “because homelessness can exacerbate vulnerability to COVID-19, California must take measures to preserve and increase housing security for Californians to protect public health.”

I couldn't agree more. Costa-Hawkins does not help us keep the people of California safe in their homes, and in fact makes it harder for cities like Los Angeles to protect its residents from displacement. There's a lot of work to be done at every level of government to help people through this unprecedented time, but keeping people from facing rent hikes is the least we should be able to do.

This is absolutely critical to confronting this crisis more directly and meeting the reality millions of people are facing.

Now is the time to suspend the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act and ensure that California renters are able to stay safe and secure in their homes.

Sincerely,



David E. Ryu
Councilmember, District Four

CC: Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
Senator Scott D. Weiner, Chair, Senate Housing Committee
Assemblymember David Chiu, Chair, Assembly Housing & Community
Development Committee