



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - August 18, 2020

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**COPA leads community effort
to extend renter protections and funding for landlords
Collaboration will prevent homelessness, engage tenants and restore unpaid rent.**

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors took two important steps today to respond to the pressure on renters unable to earn a living because of the impact of the pandemic on their jobs and businesses. The Supervisors extended the moratorium on evictions to keep tenants housed while providing funds for landlords to cover missed rent payments.

Speaking in support of the Board's actions, COPA leader Jorge Savala said, "Families have abided by the government call to shelter-in-place to reduce the spread of Covid-19, bearing the consequence of lost income, only now to be faced with losing the roof over their heads. Today's decision to extend the moratorium on evictions will help to prevent a new pandemic of homelessness."

Landlords are also feeling the pinch when rents are unpaid. As a result of meetings with COPA in June, Supervisor's Leopold and McPherson sponsored a \$1 million rental assistance program from CARES Act funds for inclusion in the 2021-22 budget.

Supervisor Leopold, having initiated the original moratorium on evictions at the start of the pandemic, added; "I recognized the severity of the problem in our community and worked hard to find the money to help people during their time of need."

Nery Garcia, COPA leader, thanked the County Supervisors for including these funds that will flow to landlords to cover missed rent payments by their tenants. "We are all in this together. Landlords can't pay their bills if tenants can't pay their rent if they can't work. COPA also requests that the Board of Supervisors work with us to develop a longer-term solution before the September 30th moratorium expires."

Supervisor Friend responded affirmatively, requesting the staff explore options for a rental payback program by examining Santa Clara, LA County and Watsonville's programs. Supervisor Friend declared, "As we await decisions at the federal and state level, we are committed to doing all we can locally to solve this problem. Today I asked County staff to explore a rental payback program and work with COPA to discuss solutions with landlords." In addition, Supervisor McPherson requested the staff to report by the 2nd week in September with 6-month and 12-month options.

COPA is continuing to engage tenants throughout the county by:

- Organizing Civic Academies to teach tenant rights and responsibilities

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- Partnering with the County staff to conduct culturally appropriate outreach and workshops to prepare tenants and landlords for the County's \$1 million rental assistance program application process.
- Collaborating with Supervisors Friend and Coonerty and county staff to develop options for rental payback programs that protect tenants and sustain landlords before the end of the September 30 moratorium.

More information:

The Holy Cross Food Pantry saw a ten-fold increase of parishioners and community members needing help when the shelter-in-place order closed businesses, leaving hundreds without work. While supplying food, we also connected parishioners via Zoom calls to teach them about the moratorium on evictions and how to write a letter to their landlord. COPA leaders shared our stories with Supervisors Leopold and McPherson, which inspired them to co-sponsor a \$1 million allocation of CARES funding for rental assistance and continue the moratorium on evictions through September 30.

[COPA](#) is a broad-based organization consisting of member institutions. We are an organization of institutions, not individuals. Individuals come and go, but institutions such as churches, congregations, synagogues, schools, unions, and membership-based nonprofits are vessels of relationships among people with shared values of faith, democracy, solidarity and traditions of mutual obligation within the life of a community. We organize across institutions to bring together a diverse cross-section of the region, rich and poor, immigrant and citizen, English-speakers and Spanish-speakers, and people of any creed and race. Individual institutions have limited power to change the social, economic and political constraints on their families, but collectively, a mix of institutions can organize around mutual interests to achieve change for the common good.

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