



Durham CAN
(Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods)
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July 24, 2020

Anthony Scott, CEO, Durham Housing Authority
Durham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Dear Mr. Scott and Durham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners,

On July 16th, the Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis (HACA) announced an extension to the moratorium on evictions due to unpaid rent until November 2, 2020. Earlier this month, WinnCompanies, a major affordable housing landlord in Massachusetts, halted evictions through the end of the year. We write to you today, to urge the Durham Housing Authority (DHA) to follow the lead of (HACA) and WinnCompanies and extend the moratorium on evictions for DHA residents.

As part of the CARES Act, a federal moratorium on evictions was established that affected public housing properties, but that moratorium is ending next week. Nothing has changed since March. The pandemic is still with us. As of yesterday North Carolina had over 1075,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and more than 1,700 deaths. People are still facing layoffs and the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation bonus is coming to an end next week.

Durham workers have been affected by layoffs related to COVID-19. According to Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) records posted on the Dataworks-NC website on July 20, between Durham and Wake county there have been around 4000 layoffs. As noted by Dataworks-NC, this number does not account for all layoffs as many small businesses have had to close and these may not be a part of the WARN records. Furthermore, many people who are self-employed have lost work during this time.

We are experiencing this economic crisis through our relationships with Durham Housing Authority residents. Many of us know residents who have experienced financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. Through grant funding, a Durham CAN member institution has been providing assistance with rent or utilities during this time. They have received a large volume of calls from DHA residents and have managed to help a lot of them, but not without frustration. Our own experience with calling the Durham Social Services number provided to residents for financial assistance left us in shock and anger at the level of disrespect, hostility and run around that we received from the other end of the line.

At a Coalition for Affordable Housing and Transit meeting in June with Mr. Scott and Legal Aid, the Hardship Exemption was suggested as an option for minimum-rent qualifying residents unable to make their rent payment. Yet, there is confusion about this. Residents don't know about it and property managers are poorly or completely uninformed about it. Furthermore, residents report discrepancies with their rent statements. An extension on the eviction moratorium would give DHA time to make sure that all residents' rent payments correspond to their current circumstances and provide information and clarity about the Hardship Extension to their residents and property managers.

We urge the Durham Housing Authority to follow the lead of the Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis and extend the moratorium on evictions due to unpaid rent until at least November 2, but preferably through the end of 2020.

Sincerely,
Durham Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods