



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

March 13, 2020

VIA E-Mail

The Honorable Paula Carey, Chief Justice of the Trial Court

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Jonathon Williams Esq., Administrator for the Trial Court

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Dear Chief Justice Carey and Attorney Williams,

We are writing to you on behalf of our constituents, ourselves, and all the people whose housing may be affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency on March 10 as the coronavirus spreads at an alarming rate. Public health officials have urged all people to refrain from large meetings, encouraged telecommuting when possible, and emphasized that people who feel sick should stay home in an effort to contain the disease.

We are requesting that the Courts place a moratorium on all evictions and foreclosures until the COVID-19 state of emergency ends. We have also filed emergency legislation to this effect (HD.4935, *An Act Providing for a Moratorium on Evictions and Foreclosures During the COVID19 Emergency*), but we understand you are empowered to take these actions directly.

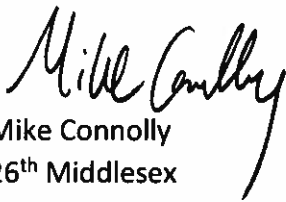
Allowing housing matters to proceed against the advice of state public health officials will put many of our constituents at risk, especially those who are elderly or immunocompromised. According to the CDC, the risk is greatest to those who are "older and who also have serious long-term health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, or lung disease;" this includes serious health outcomes and even death." Housing Court, especially on the days when motions and bench trials are heard, is often very crowded with as many as 200 cases scheduled and illness is not recognized as a defense to failing to appear in Housing Court. There is no option to self-quarantine when a person's housing is on the line. We are deeply concerned that people who feel sick will attend their hearings, and will put everyone in court, from tenants to clerks to court staff and everyone they know, at risk of contracting a highly contagious and deadly disease.

If people are evicted when they are supposed to be "self-quarantining," they may have to enter overcrowded homeless shelters or live on the streets, a result which runs directly counter to CDC recommendations. Homeless shelters already have capacity challenges and it is highly likely that COVID-19 will significantly increase shelter populations, which could lead to overcrowding. In addition, homeless people have a higher rate of infectious and chronic diseases, which puts them at higher risk

of experiencing severe or even fatal complications associated with COVID-19. Given the closure of workplaces and businesses, it will be hard for tenants to find new housing. Even if realtors are operational, landlords may not want to rent to new tenants because of COVID-19 and tenants may not be able to move because of workplace and school closures.

We have a responsibility to do all we can to mitigate the impact of this pandemic and to protect the most vulnerable. We hope that the Housing Court will take steps to help protect the public from COVID-19. We respectfully request that the Housing Court place a moratorium on all housing cases in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours in service,



Mike Connolly
26th Middlesex



Kevin Honan
17th Suffolk