



Allegheny County Council

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Title: Calling on the Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania to extend the existing moratorium on evictions in response to the COVID-19 health emergency through at least October 1, 2021.
Sponsors: Olivia Bennett, Bethany Hallam, Patrick Catena, Anita Prizio
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Calling on the Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania to extend the existing moratorium on evictions in response to the COVID-19 health emergency through at least October 1, 2021.

WHEREAS, it is axiomatic that economic security is fundamental to public health, and that we as a society are only as healthy as those most vulnerable, least economically secure, and least covered by our social services; and

WHEREAS, it is accordingly clear that we must do all we can to keep people secure enough to take care of themselves, practice social distancing, have a location in which to shelter and store supplies, and endure a quarantine or treatment if required; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization (“WHO”) has declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic, defined as the worldwide spread of a new virus for which most people do not have immunity; and

WHEREAS, as of November 18, 2020, Allegheny County is reporting 21,434 confirmed cases of COVID-19, after a seven day period in which the County reported 3,095 new cases (or an average of 442 new cases per day); and

WHEREAS, on November 18, 2020, the Allegheny County Health Department issued recommendations intended to reduce the incidence of new COVID-19 cases, specifically through the avoidance of all non-essential travel, as well as all nonessential public and private gatherings outside of individuals’ own households; and

WHEREAS, as part of the Department's announcement of the new recommendations, Director Dr. Debra Bogen clearly expressed the grave nature of the situation: “[f]or the past few weeks, I’ve asked people to follow the rules, curtail gatherings and parties, stay home except for essentials and wear masks. I’m done asking, and today I’m telling you that these are things we all must do to bring down the level of spread and keep our community safe.”; and

WHEREAS, according to current models promulgated by healthdata.org, daily deaths caused by COVID-19 are expected to be between 1,172 (if masks are universally required) and 4,689 (If mask mandates are eased) in the United States by early February of 2021, with a total of 370,000 and 587,000 predicted COVID-19 related deaths in the United States by March 21, 2021; and

WHEREAS, while estimates regarding a reasonable timeline for availability of a COVID-19 vaccine, most sources appear to suggest that a vaccine could become widely available at some point in the spring or summer of 2021; and

WHEREAS, it is the judgment of Council that the health, safety, and well-being of the County's population would be endangered by a large number of evictions before a vaccine is available; and

WHEREAS, on May 27, 2020, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued an order authorizing President Judges in the various judicial districts to continue exercising emergency powers under the Rules of Judicial Administration, 201 Pa.Code §1952(B)(2), which expressly grants broad authority to the President Judges of the Courts of Common Pleas to restructure court proceedings in response to emergencies, and it appears that this order is still in effect as of the date of this Motion;

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

Council hereby calls on the Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania to extend the moratorium on filing new actions for evictions for non-payment of rent or lease under the terms of the Landlord Tenant Act of 1951 until at least October 1, 2021. Council further calls upon the Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania to extend an identical moratorium on proceedings relating to all such eviction actions for cases filed after March 16, 2020.