

Legislation Text

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Supporting Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro in his call to all landlords in the Commonwealth and Philadelphia to provide aid to their tenants during the Covid-19 crisis and throughout its aftermath.

WHEREAS, Covid-19, the novel coronavirus, has created not only a public health emergency in Pennsylvania, but has also led to what will likely be the greatest economic crisis since the Great Recession; and

WHEREAS, Residents of the Commonwealth have been directed to stay at home in order to stop the spread of this virus. Evicting residents from their homes would undermine this critical public health goal and put both the public and evicted residents at further risk of contracting the novel Coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, Businesses throughout the Commonwealth have closed in order to stop the spread of this disease leading to record numbers of Pennsylvanians losing their jobs. By doing their part to help defeat Covid-19 and staying home, millions of residents are facing the possibility of losing their homes; and

WHEREAS, Over one and half million Pennsylvanians have lost jobs and lost wages during this crisis. Businesses will need time to reopen, unemployment compensation and federal paycheck support will take time to reach those in need, and our economy will come back slowly as regions of our Commonwealth go through phased reopening; and

WHEREAS, In a letter sent on April 28, 2020, Attorney General Josh Shapiro called on all landlords in the Commonwealth to work with their tenants to take reasonable steps to help people stay in their homes when the eviction moratorium is lifted, courts reopen, and business slowly begins to resume. While unpaid rent is owed to landlords, the city can support steps to ease this burden residents and families; and

WHEREAS, AG Shapiro called on landlords to take the following actions: 1) Not begin new eviction proceedings, regardless of the status of the moratorium, until July 15, 2020 (while retaining the right to file an eviction for a material non-payment default under the lease such as disrupting the peace or violating the law; 2) Extend grace periods for late payments and waive late fees for residents that have provided documentation of financial hardship or loss of employment related to the COVID-19 crisis; 3) Create payment plans for residents, including those who had previously outstanding eviction balances and put the plan in writing; and 4) Help residents identify and access resources available to them through government and community programs; and

WHEREAS, In an initiative supported by all of City Council, fifteen regional lenders agreed to work with every mortgage holder on a case by case basis to provide forbearance options which will help keep people in their homes. In addition to following the AG's guidance, landlords who receive mortgage forbearance agreements from their lender should extend this forgiveness to their tenants who demonstrate a need; and

WHEREAS, As AG Shapiro writes, we can beat this disease if we come together, look out for one another, and ensure that everyone is able to adhere to public health guidelines. We commend the Pennsylvania landlords who are already taking steps to assist their tenants, and we look forward to having the support of many more as we navigate our way out of this crisis together; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby supports Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro in his call to all landlords in the Commonwealth and Philadelphia to provide aid to their tenants during the Covid-19 crisis and throughout its aftermath.