



Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility

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November 25, 2020

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Dear Governor Inslee,

We, at Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (WPSR), would like to extend our gratitude to you for setting a strong precedent for housing and health justice through extension of the eviction moratorium in Washington state until the end of this year. As the moratorium is one of the few protections our state's low-income individuals have to stay safe, healthy, and housed during this unprecedented time of crisis, **we urge you to extend the evictions moratorium until March 31st 2021 with all current tenant protections left in place. We cannot allow any new loopholes to risk the housing stability of our state's most impacted community members.**

Recent data released from the Census Bureau's Pulse survey demonstrates that over 185,000 renters in Washington state are currently behind on rent, with Latinx and Black households disproportionately impacted. With more than 250,000 Washingtonians already severely rent burdened prior to the impacts of COVID-19, the State could be facing a housing crisis of immense proportions in 2021. Without a strong moratorium, these individuals and families will face the imminent threat of eviction and ensuing health-related risks including, but not limited to: threats to their physical and mental health, greater need of already at-capacity emergency services, and even the risk of premature death.

We know that the health consequences of evictions will not be felt equally: systemic inequities built into our economic, housing, and health-related policies - [including the racialized and gendered rates of eviction across Washington](#) - disproportionately impact women and communities of color. It is also clear, [as recent research published by Sheen et al.](#) demonstrates, there is a direct connection between increased evictions and increased coronavirus cases and community spread. As such, an end to the eviction moratorium before the legislature has the opportunity to enshrine robust tenant protections into law would represent both a risk to the public health of our state, and a deepening of existing racial inequities in health and housing.

The statewide membership of WPSR, a health-professional advocacy organization working to create a healthier world, is keenly aware that homelessness, and unsafe and high cost-burden housing, are significant public health issues that can impact the mental and physical well-being of Washington residents for years, if not for generations. As health professionals, we cannot endorse ending the evictions moratorium in the middle of the winter, while a pandemic continues to ravage our communities, and a public health catastrophe looms for thousands of rent-burdened residents.



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We implore you to utilize your power to keep the moratorium in place. Please protect our renters from having to suffer the deleterious, direct physical and mental health impacts of being unhoused. Let us not fail our neighbors and let them compromise spending on basic needs during a time of crisis, simply to keep a roof over their heads.

Sincerely,

Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility

Mark R. Vossler, MD
President, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility

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