

Governor Northam Launches Rent and Mortgage Relief Program to Assist Virginians Facing Eviction or Foreclosure

\$50 million will provide rent and mortgage relief for households experiencing financial instability due to COVID-19

Richmond—Governor Ralph Northam today launched the Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP), which will provide \$50 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding for households facing eviction or foreclosure due to COVID-19. RMRP will provide short-term financial assistance on behalf of households in the form of rent and mortgage payments.

“Expanding access to safe, affordable housing has been and will continue to be a top priority of my administration, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond,” said Governor Northam. “The Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program will help Virginians experiencing financial instability as a result of this unprecedented health crisis by preventing evictions and foreclosures and keeping Virginia families safely in their homes as we battle this virus.”

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will administer the \$50 million program through a variety of partners, including nonprofit organizations and local governments, which will receive upfront funds that they will distribute on behalf of eligible households. Individuals and families receiving funding will also be connected to housing counseling and receive other technical assistance.

Eligible households must demonstrate an inability to make rent or mortgage payments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Monthly rent or mortgage must be at or below 150 percent Fair Market Rent (FMR), and eligible households must have a gross household income at or below 80 percent of area median income (AMI).

“Safe, stable housing is essential for public health,” said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Brian Ball. “As we continue to secure funding for rent and mortgage assistance, this \$50 million investment will serve the most vulnerable Virginians while providing a roadmap for future relief.”

To ensure RMRP funding assists households most in need, the program will complete targeted outreach to communities of color across Virginia. Before the pandemic, analysis from RVA Eviction Lab at Virginia Commonwealth University found that minority communities had higher eviction rates, even after controlling for income, property value, and other characteristics. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a disproportionate impact on people of color.

“DHCD delivers programs through our partners that are closest to the Commonwealth’s communities, and our team is deeply appreciative of the local and regional network that has

rapidly developed this program to assist in meeting this critical housing and health need,” said DHCD Director Erik Johnston. “We urge all tenant advocates, landlords, lenders, philanthropy, local governments and faith communities to partner with your local program providers to ensure that these funds stretch as far as possible to Virginians most in need of this assistance.”

The program will also give precedence to households without other federal and state eviction or foreclosure protections. From June 29 to July 20, priority will be given to households with current gross incomes equal to or below 50 percent of AMI. After July 20, households with current gross incomes at or below 80 percent of AMI will be also be included. In addition, households with an unlawful detainer action dated prior to June 8 will be given top consideration.

To identify the local RMRP administering organization for a household and to conduct a self-assessment for eligibility, visit dhcd.virginia.gov/eligibility or call 211 VIRGINIA by dialing 2-1-1 from your phone. Tenants and homeowners are encouraged to know their rights and responsibilities and pay their rent and mortgages on time if they are able. Visit StayHomeVirginia.com for additional information and resources.

###