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Sent: Thursday, May 20, 2021 7:59 PM
To: Comments Mailbox
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Subject: [External]Comments on Eviction Moratorium

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Good Evening,

I am writing to you in response to the recommendations released by a special committee formed to address the potential flood of landlord-tenant eviction cases upon the impending expiration of the unfair eviction moratorium imposed by Governor Murphy. I am the owner of a single-family home in Northern New Jersey, which is my only rental property. New tenants moved into my home in January of 2021. As soon as the COVID-19 pandemic began and Governor Murphy imposed a blanket moratorium on evictions, my tenants completely stopped making payment of their rent. They have not responded to any of our requests for payment, and they have refused to provide us with the necessary contact information so that we can apply for additional rent relief. To-date, we have received only six months of partial rent payments from the State because of their refusal to cooperate. They allowed additional parties to move into our home without our approval, and they have not paid their water bill or other utilities. In fact, they tampered with their water meter to stop water usage from accruing until March 31, 2021, the day that their lease expired, at which point the water meter magically started working again. With all of the money that they have saved from not paying their rent, they are both driving brand new cars.

Since our tenants have numerous previous evictions and at least thirteen previous legal judgments entered against them, it is unlikely that we will ever be able to collect the money that they owe. My husband and I are retired senior citizens who live on our Social Security income, which had been supplemented by the rental income from this home. We cannot attempt to find new tenants, and we cannot take advantage of a strong market in order to attempt to sell the home. Because of the moratorium, we have been forced to support these dishonest individuals and allow them to live in our home for free (and without a lease) for many months, and we will have to continue to do so for many more months. In fact, they have already told us that they have no intention of vacating the property before the end of the year. That means that by the time this is over, they will have been living in my home without paying me a cent of the rent that they owe for over twenty-one months.

I find it incredibly unfair that Governor Murphy has allowed this harmful eviction moratorium to continue for so long. Capacity limitations have been waived, businesses are open, and people all across the state are returning to stores, restaurants and offices. Meanwhile, tenants are allowed to continue to take advantage of the moratorium and live rent free. I question how Governor Murphy could not make some provision in the moratorium to distinguish from tenants who suffered financial harm due to COVID-19 and actually needed help paying their rent, and tenants who are just taking advantage of the system to live rent free. Tenants did not have to prove loss of income or financial hardship – they simply were permitted to stop paying their rent without any consequences. I also wonder how Governor Murphy has the power to interfere with a private contract, a lease agreement, between myself and my tenants, and to tell me

and other landlords across the state that we have to continue to permit tenants to reside in our homes when their leases have expired and they have not made a single attempt to pay their monthly rent.

The State needs to do something to address the financial harm imposed on landlords and, when evictions are allowed to proceed, the courts need to streamline the eviction process to prioritize cases where tenants have not made any attempts to pay their rent since the moratorium was imposed; or where small landlords like myself own a single property that they are in danger of losing because they cannot afford to pay the taxes and other operating expenses of the property when they have lost their rental income for such a long period of time. Since Governor Murphy has not acted to remedy the financial hardship imposed on many landlords throughout the state, it is up to the courts to help small landlords save their properties after this unfair, if not illegal, moratorium has finally come to an end.

Thank you,

Rita R. Rollins

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