



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Ralph S. Northam
Governor

June 25, 2020

Dear Chief Judge:

I write regarding the Commonwealth's establishment of a rent and mortgage relief program to address the economic hardship that many individuals and families face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, I sent a letter to the Honorable Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons on June 6, 2020 requesting that he extend and renew the Order Declaring a Judicial Emergency in Response to COVID-19 Emergency to suspend unlawful detainer proceedings for a period of 30 days to allow the Commonwealth the time to implement a comprehensive rent relief program. The Order was amended on June 8, 2020 to include a temporary stay of unlawful detainers and writs of evictions. The Order was subsequently amended on June 22, 2020 stating that effective June 29, 2020, courts may resume hearing unlawful detainer actions and issuing writs of eviction.

The Commonwealth intends to initiate a rent relief program on June 29, 2020. This program will offer financial assistance in the form of rent and mortgage payments on behalf of households experiencing financial instability due to the pandemic. We are working through a network of partners who will administer the funds on behalf of eligible households, and the funds will begin to transfer as early as next week. I believe a substantial number of households that are facing unlawful detainer actions will be eligible for this assistance.

As such, we respectfully request that your court delay until July 20, 2020 docketing unlawful detainer actions and issuing writs of eviction for failure to pay rent so that tenants facing such actions are able to seek assistance through the rent relief program. The Department of Housing and Community Development will release a comprehensive set of guidelines for the program on June 29, 2020. We will be sure to follow up with you on the 29th so that you have access to those guidelines and can incorporate the program parameters into your decision-making.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph S. Northam".

Ralph S. Northam