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County Executive

DANE COUNTY

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Mayor of Madison



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Dane County, City of Madison Announce \$16.2 Million Aid Package to Prevent Evictions During the Pandemic

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway joined Tenant Resource Center Executive Director Robin Sereno to announce the creation of an estimated \$16.2 million emergency package to help prevent evictions in the community. As the COVID-19 pandemic carries into 2021, the resultant economic downturn continues to cause record levels of unemployment and housing instability. This new, direct assistance for tenants will come wrapped in housing counseling, education for the landlord on federal mortgage protections, case management, outreach, and mediation services provided by TRC.

“This multimillion dollar aid package will help ease the fear many in our community have about continuing to make ends meet in this unprecedented time,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “Many in our community are facing poverty as a result of losing their jobs during the pandemic. The last thing we want people to worry about is whether or not they will lose their home and need to uproot their family for no longer being able to afford housing. We are committed to getting this funding out to door as quickly as possible to help tenants throughout Dane County get the assistance they need to keep the place they call home.”

Late last month, the federal government passed a \$900 billion COVID-19 relief bill authorizing additional funding to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic across multiple areas of need. The act includes \$25 billion in funding for Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA), much of which is being distributed to units of local government with populations above 200,000. Under the new federal plan, the City and the County are each eligible to receive funds for use to assist renters and landlords dealing with impacts of the pandemic. Official allocations have not yet been disclosed, but are anticipated to total about \$16.2 million—with Dane County expected to receive \$8.5 million and the City of Madison expected to receive \$7.7 million. The State of Wisconsin will receive \$386,777,591 from the federal plan, and Dane County has begun working with the State to secure additional funds.

With this estimated \$16.2 million emergency package, Dane County and the City of Madison hope to help tenants make ends meet until more assistance can be provided. The City and the County leaders pledge to coordinate their use of the funds to deliver assistance in the most effective way possible, working with the Tenant Resource Center and other community partners. As it did with funds provided under the CARES Act, Dane County will partner with the Tenant Resource Center to deliver assistance to renters and landlords.

“We must take steps to ensure that all within Madison who are eligible for this assistance have access to it,” the Mayor said. She added she intends, this month, to take a plan to the Common Council laying out how community partners will be selected. “I anticipate using at least 90% of available funds for direct rental assistance with the balance going to support the work of community partners and other services that promote housing stability.”

While extensions of federal eviction moratoriums have helped stem a wave of evictions, the moratoriums do not cancel rent or fees for late payment of rent. Many renters have fallen behind on their rent due to continued economic hardship related to the pandemic's effect on our economy.

"Throughout the past 40+ years, the Tenant Resource Center has staunchly advocated for the right to safe, stable housing for all community members," said Robin Sereno, Executive Director of the Tenant Resource Center. "We will continue to do so as we once again partner to disburse millions of dollars of emergency rental assistance funding throughout the county. We very much appreciate and acknowledge the trust that residents and officials throughout Dane County have placed in our eviction prevention and housing justice work."

The amount of funding available is anticipated to be distributed quickly, given the severity of need in Dane County. Funds will be focused on clearing rental arrears for tenants who make 50% area median income (AMI) or less. The federal government requires that households in which one or more members is unemployed and has been unemployed for longer than 90 days also be prioritized. The maximum funding available per household will be up to six months of rental arrears at the local fair market rate (FMR) for rent, plus 15%.

Additionally, households are eligible for assistance if one or more individuals has qualified for unemployment benefits, has experienced a reduction in household income, has incurred significant costs, and/or has experienced other financial hardship due directly or indirectly to the COVID-19 pandemic, and where one or more individuals can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

The legislation allows landlords to apply for assistance on behalf of their tenants that meet the program eligibility requirements. Providers will be required to do active engagement to landlords and create streamlined systems for them to receive rent reimbursement. Tenants and landlords will be able to apply for assistance via an online application process and assessment that targets those potentially facing eviction to the best recourse for their needs. The program with TRC will open the first week of February and will be for back-owed rent only.

TRC provided eviction prevention and housing stability services last summer, using \$10 million of CARES Act funding allocated by Dane County. Funds were depleted within 12 weeks. In total, the program served 10,656 households. Of the assistance provided, 87.7% of funds went to households headed by a person of color, and 72% to households headed by women. 66.7% of the funds were distributed to renters within the City of Madison, and 33.3% to renters in Dane County communities outside of the City of Madison.

A resolution to approve the Tenant Resource Center's contract with Dane County will be introduced and move through the County's legislative process in the coming weeks. The earliest it could be approved would be at the January 21st meeting of the Dane County Board.

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