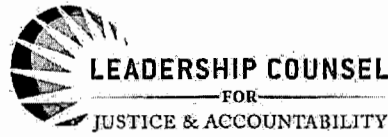


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**From:** Leslie Martinez <lmartinez@leadershipcounsel.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 22, 2020 8:46 AM  
**To:** BOSComments  
**Subject:** 9/22 BOS Meeting, Consent Item #33  
**Attachments:** Housing Retention Program Letter\_9\_22 (1).pdf

**CAUTION!!! - EXTERNAL EMAIL - THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK**

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September 22, 2020

Fresno County Board of Supervisors  
Chairman Buddy Mendes  
2281 Tulare Street  
Fresno, California 93721

*Sent Via Email*

**RE: CONSENT AGENDA ITEM #33 HOUSING RETENTION PROGRAM**

Dear Board of Supervisors,

First, we would like to thank Supervisor Pacheco and Supervisor Quintero for their leadership and commitment to helping renters in Fresno County by setting up a Housing Retention Program. We also thank Supervisor Pacheco for consulting Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability and other community based organizations in the development of this program. We firmly believe that this program has the potential to alleviate many hardships that low income rural residents are facing in the wake of the global pandemic and, accordingly, we have included herein our suggestions to ensure accessibility to the program.

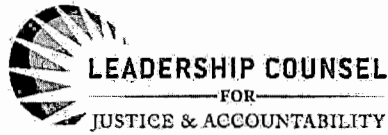
**COVID-19 Disproportionate Impacts on Latino Community**

Fresno County's Data and Surveillance Dashboard demonstrates disproportionate impact to the Latino community. According to available data, Latinos in Fresno County are almost three times as likely as white residents to contract COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> We also know that low-income residents in Black and Brown neighborhoods are at a higher risk of eviction than other communities in Fresno County. It is critical that this program reach the most vulnerable residents in Fresno County including the Latino and Black communities that have borne the brunt of the pandemic.

Even prior to the pandemic, housing insecurity was a major obstacle to household and community stability in Fresno. Prior to the pandemic 60% of renters in Fresno County were cost-burdened, and over 75% of lower income residents were paying more than 30% of their income to pay rent. The impacts of COVID have only exacerbated this insecurity. With many families in Fresno County turning their homes into classrooms and continuing to navigate uncertain times, it is imperative that bold, inclusive policies are created to ensure that all families can stay in their homes.

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<sup>1</sup><https://cofgisonline.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=1f82e8eb24c0403c90e774202c5dafa>



We respectfully request Board of Supervisors expand and strengthen the proposed Housing Retention Program by doing the following to ensure families in Fresno County are protected:

- Allow informal documentation that demonstrates tenancy for tenants without a formal lease agreement
- Allow that resources from this program are available to protect tenants that will be unable to pay rent on time in the coming months in addition to those tenants that have already fallen behind on rent.
- Allow that resources from the program can pay for utility charges (water, electricity, etc.) to protect against utility shut-offs and severe arrearages.
- If the funds will be given to landlords, require that landlord provide proof of payment to the tenant
- Ensure that any additional eligibility requirements will be discussed in a public meeting with input from all stakeholders

We look forward to seeing the program implemented with the above recommendations to ensure this program reaches the most vulnerable tenants.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Respectfully,

Leslie Martinez, Policy Advocate, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability