



Connecticut  
Legal Services



NEW HAVEN  
LEGAL  
ASSISTANCE  
ASSOCIATION, INC.

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Richard Robinson  
Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court  
231 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Patrick L. Carroll III  
Chief Court Administrator  
Connecticut Judicial Branch  
231 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

The Honorable Elizabeth Bozzuto  
Deputy Chief Court Administrator  
Connecticut Judicial Branch  
231 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Justice Robinson, Judge Carroll and Judge Buzzuto

This letter is sent on behalf of the three legal services program in Connecticut, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, and the Connecticut Legal Rights Project, which actively represent tenants in summary process actions as well as, in the case of the Fair Housing Center, foreclosure actions.

We are pleased to see that the Judicial Branch has decided to not schedule or hear summary process matters or foreclosure actions for the next two weeks in light of the COVID-19 crisis. This action is critical to containing the spread of infection to litigants, court personnel, and the community. Public health research demonstrates that epidemics can be contained by a process of social isolation intended to “flatten the curve,” reducing the number of people infected by the disease at any one time. We urge the Judicial Department to extend this suspension beyond two weeks until such time as there is assurance that the crisis has been contained.

However, suspending hearings is not sufficient. While hearings are suspended, the housing courts and sessions will continue to allow new eviction cases to be filed, default judgments to be entered, and, most seriously, executions to be issued and carried out without the necessity for a hearing.

The tenants against whom evictions are filed in housing courts and sessions are among the most vulnerable of our state’s residents. These residents include the elderly on fixed incomes, persons with mental and physical disabilities, and working mothers in low wage jobs who now face a drop in pay due to a decrease in the demand for their services. As this public health crisis

continues, parents will face the additional complication of school closures, necessitating finding and affording child care so they can continue to work (if they still have jobs to go to).

Evictions in a time of a public health crisis simply means that families – including many children -- will become homeless. The homeless are perhaps the demographic most at risk for contracting and transmitting the virus.

Our homeless shelters are already filled with waiting lists. Moreover, the shelters are taking their own steps to limit entry by COVID-19- infected (or potentially infected, since testing is not currently widespread) persons to protect their clients, their staffs, and the larger community. Indeed, there is a fear that shelters will be forced to limit the number of people they admit so they can space people away from each other, and because they fear limits on staffing if/when the people who work there are unable to come to work.

The Governor has declared a public emergency. We request the Judicial Branch take action to protect the health of tenants in rental housing suspending all evictions – and particularly the issuance and carrying out of summary process executions -- for no less than 30 days while the state formulates a plan for balancing access to courts with protecting the public health and safety.

Sincerely



Shelley A. White

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CC: Governor Ned Lamont  
Attorney General William Tong