

ACLU of Wisconsin: Calls on Gov. Evers to prevent mass evictions amid COVID-19

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MILWAUKEE — The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin today called on Governor Tony Evers to extend a statewide moratorium on evictions amid the immense financial and emotional turmoil caused by COVID-19, particularly for people of color and women.

Along with 19 other state affiliates, the ACLU sent letters to local elected officials across the country urging them to issue or expand statewide moratoria against evictions and commit to preventing mass evictions after these moratoria end.

Across the nation, the COVID-19 pandemic has already resulted in widespread and devastating economic consequences, as unemployment claims continue to climb. In the face of staggering unemployment numbers, millions of tenants face the imminent threat of losing their homes due to the inability to pay.

“The disproportionate toll that the COVID-19 crisis has taken on communities of color has already been devastating enough, and the burden will only become more severe if action isn’t taken to prevent evictions,” said Asma Kadri Keeler, staff attorney with the ACLU of Wisconsin. “Homelessness and housing instability cause a myriad of lasting financial, emotional, and health problems which victimize women of color and their families most acutely. In the pandemic context, it also poses a serious health risk to the public writ large.”

The letter asks the governor to expand his current moratorium to include:

- Halting every stage of the eviction process including initiation and

enforcement;

- Prohibitions on late fees and credit reporting based on missed rental payments;
- Protections against tenant blacklisting;
- Continuing to prevent mass evictions during and after the pandemic;
- Application to all types of tenants and lease violations;
- Prohibitions against the collection of late fees and retaliation against tenants who assert their rights under the moratorium.

“As millions of people lose their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, renters are faced with the added threat of being put out of their homes,” said Sandra Park, senior attorney at the ACLU. “Evictions will disproportionately harm communities of color, and particularly, women of color. All residents — regardless of their circumstances or background — should have access to safe and stable housing throughout the course of this ongoing public health crisis.”

The letter points to data finding that “one in eight renters in Milwaukee in 2016 alone were forced to move due to eviction proceedings resulting in over 16,000 adults and children evicted by Milwaukee landlords,” with a disproportionate share of evictions occurring in predominantly Black communities. And, while comprising just nine percent of the city’s overall population, Black women in Milwaukee suffered 30 percent of all evictions.

The ACLU has worked over the years to address [unfair eviction screening policies](#), which disproportionately undermine housing opportunities for women of color and will present a barrier to safe housing opportunities if mass evictions take place.

The letter and this release can both be found here: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/en/-news/aclu-wisconsin-calls-governor-evers-prevent-mass-evictions-amid-covid-19>