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CITY OF  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**

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**Ted Wheeler, Mayor**  
Amanda Fritz, Commissioner  
Jo Ann Hardesty, Commissioner  
Chloe Eudaly, Commissioner

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April 1, 2020

To Our State and Federal Elected Official Partners,

Rent is due today. We are in the early weeks of a public health emergency, facing unprecedented levels of unemployment, and thousands of people and businesses in Portland who have lost their incomes are still on the hook for rent.

While local and statewide moratoriums on residential and commercial evictions were a vital step to stabilize renters, we need further action at the state and federal levels to stem the tide of evictions, foreclosures, and bankruptcies that will occur without further intervention. Individuals and businesses whose income or expenses have been substantially impacted by COVID-19 need forgiveness of all residential and commercial rent and mortgage payments for the duration of this emergency.

The City and the State have taken necessary action to flatten the growth curve of this pandemic through “Stay Home, Save Lives” orders, closing businesses, and mandating social distancing. Thousands of Portlanders have lost their livelihoods and health insurance and are incurring additional expenses as a result of the crisis, including childcare, grocery delivery, and healthcare costs.

Since 2015, Portland has been in a declared Housing State of Emergency. Approximately half of Portland residents are renters. The average low-income, Black, Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander, senior, single mother, and foreign-born households spend more than a third of their income on rent. Those who defer rent payments may accumulate significant personal debt and those who are unable to repay may ultimately face eviction.

Despite the forbearance for federally backed loans, homeowners will continue to accrue normally scheduled fees, penalties, and interest, which they will still owe with the deferred payments after the forbearance period is over. Additionally, we have become aware that many lenders are not offering reasonable repayment plans. According to the Federal Reserve’s most recent annual survey of the economic well-being of U.S. households, almost 40 percent of Americans do not have cash on hand to cover an unexpected expense of \$400<sup>1</sup>. Without a moratorium and forgiveness of residential rent and mortgage payments, we are putting tens of thousands of Portlanders who currently have housing at risk of becoming destitute or homeless as a result of this public health crisis.

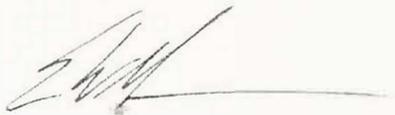
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2018-report-economic-well-being-us-households-201905.pdf>

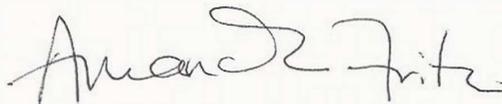
In these long weeks, we have also seen some of Portland's most cherished businesses close, lay off employees, and warn us of the consequences of inaction. While interventions ranging from forgivable SBA loans to Portland's Small Business Relief Fund provide a lifeline for significantly impacted businesses, they are not enough to keep workers employed and insured and will not be enough to keep many businesses afloat. Portland businesses face rent and mortgage payments without the operating revenue to pay their expenses and risk financial collapse. We thank the Governor for her recent executive order announcing a 90-day moratorium on commercial evictions and urge forgiveness of commercial rent and mortgage payments.

Portland City Council stands in solidarity with renters, homeowners, and business owners struggling to stay in place during this time of crisis. We hear the concerns raised by so many of our constituents and call on our fellow elected officials at the state and federal levels to take action: **Forgive all rent and mortgage payments for renters and businesses whose income or expenses have been substantially impacted by COVID-19.**

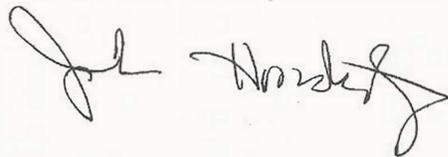
In Solidarity,



Ted Wheeler  
Mayor



Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner



Jo Ann Hardesty  
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Commissioner