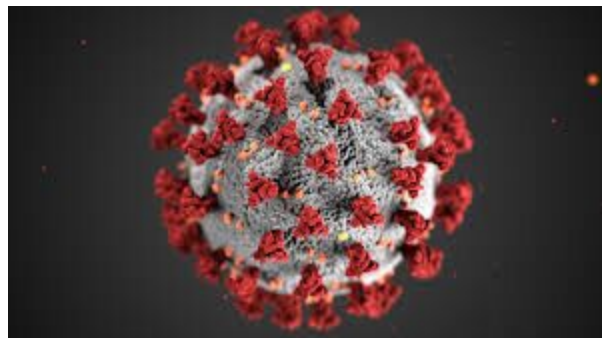


California COVID-19 rent relief program hits major milestone

September 29, 2021



California's COVID-19 Rent Relief Program is reaching a significant milestone today – by the end of the day, more than \$1 billion in funding will be obligated – meaning the money has either been paid or approved for payment and awaiting disbursement – and will assist over 74,000 additional households.

More than \$526 million of the \$1 billion in rental and utility assistance has already been distributed to 44,432 low-income California households who suffered financial hardship because of the pandemic.

The milestone represents a 638 percent increase since June 28th, when Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 832, which increased the level of assistance to 100 percent for both back rent and prospective rent. More than 243,000 applications have been received, and more than \$2.2 billion in rent and utility assistance is currently requested and is pending eligibility verification and fraud prevention screening.

“In just six months, we have provided essential assistance to more than 44,000 households to keep families safely housed,” said Governor Newsom. “Our program has been so successful that cities like Los Angeles decided to join efforts with the state to have an even greater impact.”

Bolstering tenant protections from eviction, beginning October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022, tenants earning less than 80 percent of the area median income will be protected through a pre-eviction diversion process through the courts, so long as they have submitted a completed application for rental relief through either the state or a locally administered program.

“The COVID-19 pandemic brought so much pain and economic disruption, particularly to low-wage workers and low-income renter households,” said Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency Secretary Lourdes Castro Ramírez.

“Working with over 130 community-based partners, we are reaching families hardest hit – 85 percent being very low- or extremely low-income – and making landlords whole. Rent relief has been a game changer for Californians at greatest risk of displacement or becoming homeless.”

“We have been moving with a sense of urgency to ensure that renters and landlords who need assistance can get it as quickly as possible,” said Department of Housing and Community Development Director Gustavo Velasquez. “Keeping families stably housed continues to be a critical public health measure, as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“California has made important improvements to its Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program and is now among the best statewide programs in the country by rate of spending and number of people assisted,” said President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition Diane Yentel.

“While the program had early challenges, the state is to be commended for recognizing the need for improvements in program design and implementation, and building on lessons learned to course correct. Now, California has one of the country’s more successful ERA programs and serves as a model to other states and localities to adopt evidence-based best practices to expedite assistance to tenants and landlords.”

In addition to providing 100 percent of back rent and prospective rent, AB 832 also gave California the strongest eviction protections in the nation. The extension of state-level eviction protections, which were initially established over a year ago, have provided much needed housing stability for Californians throughout the pandemic. As we continue to recover following the end of the state’s existing protections, additional protections will be in place through the end of March 2022 for households that are at or below 80 percent of Area Median Income and complete an application for assistance through either the state or locally administered programs.

Additional information about today’s milestone numbers can be found on the California COVID-19 Rent Relief Program’s interactive dashboard. The dashboard allows people to see the state’s overall rent relief numbers, drill down to see the numbers for individual jurisdictions participating in the state program, and the income, ethnicity, age, race and other demographic characteristics of tenants who have applied. It is updated weekly as new payments are made to assist households.