

Attachment B – COVID-19 Tenant Protections

1) Sonoma County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

Sonoma County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) launched in April 2021 and stopped accepting applications in August 2022. The program was designed to help with back rent/utility debt from April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021. The Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) received and administered the funds locally in partnership with local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

The CDC was awarded \$45.8 million in both State and Federal funds under normal allocations and another \$312,229 in reallocated Federal funds. The program has so far distributed \$40,196,099 in direct assistance to 2,903 households, with total of \$45,600,000 expended to date, including administrative costs. The remaining balance continues to provide direct assistance to households accepted into the program prior to March 31, 2022, and funds associated administration. Note that by the end of the end of the first quarter, 2024, the ERAP Program aims to have reviewed and completely processed any remaining applications submitted within program parameters.

2) State and Local Eviction Protections

Concurrent with ERAP, the State of California enacted eviction protections for those economically and physically affected by COVID-19. The California COVID-19 Rental Housing Recovery Act restricted certain unlawful detainer (UD) actions on some residential property for non-payment of rent. An unlawful detainer - or court eviction - is a legal process where a landlord uses the courts to remove a tenant. Subsequent State law prohibited judges from allowing evictions to proceed through June 30, 2022, if tenants had: 1) COVID-19 related health or economic impacts; 2) sought rental relief for unpaid rent owed between March 2020 and October 2021; and 3) applied for emergency rental assistance on or before March 31, 2022.

Sonoma County's tenant protections, initially adopted prior to State protections and expanded by the Just Cause ordinance, provided additional safeguards. The County's Just Cause ordinance applied to more bases for eviction than State law Just Cause protections generally do, and stayed in effect until sunseting concurrently with the end of the repayment period for back-rent by certain tenants pursuant to [Ordinance 6301](#) and State law, on September 30, 2022.

On August 1, 2022, the clock started on a 60-day repayment requirement for local tenants to pay at least 25% of unpaid rent accrued during March 2020 - October 2021. By the close of September 30, 2022, a tenant must have paid 25% of the unpaid rent accrued between March 2020 and October 2021 to ensure those debts would never be the basis of an eviction. Finally, state-level preemption of the County's ability to act to prevent evictions related to COVID-based nonpayment ended on July 1, 2022. Federal, state, and local policy measures mitigated challenges for millions of households nationwide that resulted from COVID-19. Additional relief came from economic impact payments, increases to unemployment insurance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and childcare tax credits, which helped low- and middle-income households meet basic needs. As many of these emergency resources phase out, low-income renters are likely facing a higher cost of living, escalating rents, and increased housing instability. Eviction filing rates across the nation that are approaching or surpassing pre-pandemic levels.