

Communication from Public

Name: Gina Viola

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Comments for Public Posting: This rental assistance program is not enough: Nearly a year into the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of Angelenos are behind on rent and unsure how they are going to make future rent payments. The rent debt crisis is forcing tenants to make difficult choices between paying rent and keeping a roof over their heads, and paying for other necessities like food and medicine. The only scaled solution to the rent debt crisis is regulatory action to forgive rent debt and suspend the obligation to pay rent for struggling tenant households, along with using public dollars to set up a fund for landlords who are at risk of losing their properties. This is the only way to relieve the rent debt burden from every tenant who needs relief. SB 91 was not the policy that tenants and advocates wanted. It is a half-measure that will leave some tenants out. The SB 91 framework, which the City is going to now implement locally, does not adequately address the rent debt or ongoing rent obligations facing LA tenants, as HCID's report notes. Under the SB 91 framework, landlords have near total control over the amount of rental assistance a tenant receives. We are deeply concerned that the tenant who will be left out are the ones who need relief the most. Further, as designed, the program will use limited public dollars to line the pockets of corporate landlords who are not in need of assistance right now. We have some specific concerns about the local program being proposed in HCID's report: o First we are concerned about transparency and data. How will the City ensure that regular data and metrics on the program are shared out with the public regularly so we know where the program gaps are? The HCID report shared that only 56% of landlords participated last time, but did not provide any further data on why. We need to know the shortcomings of the program so we can design a better program when the next round of federal dollars comes through. o Second, we are concerned that the \$10,000 cap will not cover all arrears for some tenants even though SB 91 is intended to cover all of a tenant's rent debt if their landlord is willing to participate. The City should not place a cap on assistance. o Third, we are concerned that HCID is proposing another lottery system, which means many tenants will face uncertainty for weeks. o Fourth, the City is NOT proposing any additional conditions be placed on the funding. We are concerned that landlords will take this money

and then push out and harass their tenants anyway. The City should explore the complementary policies it can pursue to provide further security to tenants. For example, the City could refer any tenant whose landlord refused the 80% deal to StayHousedLA and other enforcement to identify/stop harassment. And of course, the City needs to pass the anti-tenant harassment ordinance and a codified right to counsel. o Lastly, HCID proposes to allocate \$21 million for admin costs, with \$3 million going to the Eviction Defense Program. This is a good start, but we should be taking the opportunity to make a more robust investment in eviction prevention, including funds for anti-harassment enforcement. As HCID mentions, this round of money will not likely be enough to cover all of the outstanding rent debt owed, and more money will be needed. Meanwhile, tenants will remain in a precarious situation. The only action that will provide relief immediately to tenants is the cancellation of rent.