

## Polis asked to extend eviction ban

### RENTALS

#### Group wants another 60 days to give tenants and landlords more time to catch up

By Aldo Svaldi

*The Denver Post*

Local government and nonprofit leaders asked Gov. Jared Polis on Monday to provide tenants actively seeking rental assistance dollars an additional two months to avoid eviction as the expiration of a federal moratorium fast approaches.

“No one eligible for rental assistance should be put out of their homes, especially because of systemic factors beyond their control. Allowing hardworking renters to be evicted at this point in Colorado’s recovery would cause particular harm to individuals, families, and our community,” the supporters of an extension said in a letter addressed to Polis.

Nearly three dozen local government officials signed, including Denver Mayor Michael Hancock and Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman, as well as representatives of 51 nonprofits and other organizations.

The letter asks the governor to issue a state executive order barring evictions until Sept. 30 against those seeking rental assistance. On Oct. 1, a new state rule kicks in that allows tenants to catch up on the rent until a judge rules on an eviction case.

Landlords are barred from evicting tenants who can’t make the rent because of financial hardships connected to the pandemic under a moratorium issued by the Centers for Disease Control. Set to expire June 30, that federal order was extended until July 31 to allow more time for rental assistance dollars to get out.

Local and state housing agencies nationally distributed \$1.52 billion in emergency rental assistance funds in June, more than they pushed out in the prior five months combined. But significant backlogs remain in what is a verification-intensive process. And some people who would qualify for assistance remain unaware it is available. The Colorado Division of Housing had 12,235 applications seeking nearly \$78 million in rental assistance pending as of the first week of July, according to the letter. That contrasts with 36,606 applications providing more than \$100 million in assistance approved going back to March.

But many of those approved applications still haven’t delivered a check to cover outstanding obligations and nearly six in 10 of the pending applications have been reviewed but need additional information from either the landlord or tenant, “often requiring time- and resource-intensive outreach,” according to the letter.

“The governor and the Polis administration’s approach throughout the pandemic has been to help hardworking Coloradans keep up with their rent payments. The

governor and his team review all input including letters and appreciate the engagement of so many Coloradans on this important issue,” said spokesman Conor Cahill in an email.

Groups representing landlords have cited consistently high rent collection rates and low eviction filings in the first half of 2021 as proof that efforts to help tenants catch up are working and no extensions are needed. According to the Colorado Apartment Association, June rent collections were running at 97.2% — not far from pre-pandemic levels and above the collection rates seen in most other states. Eviction filings are also low.

“Colorado’s stable rental economy demonstrates our programs are working and there is no need to artificially limit peoples’ access to court,” Drew Hamrick, the association’s general counsel, said in a release.

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 limit people's access to rental," New Frontier, the non-partisan research organization, said in a release.