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GOVERNOR PARSON HIGHLIGHTS COVID-19 HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR MISSOURIANS

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(https://governor.mo.gov/sites/gov/files/media/image/2018/09/news-default.jpg)

JEFFERSON CITY □ During today's COVID-19 briefing, Governor Parson highlighted housing assistance and resources for Missourians amid the COVID-19 crisis.

Under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Missouri will receive funding for additional resources to help meet emerging needs, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program.

Existing emergency CDBG regulations allow for grant payments to providers of items and services such as food, clothing, housing, or utilities on behalf of an individual or family. With this funding under the CARES Act, 15 of Missouri's largest cities and counties, including the St. Louis and Kansas City metro regions, will receive over $24 million dollars in assistance.

Missouri also expects to receive approximately $9.4 million for the ESG program, which will be administered by the Missouri Housing Development Commission. These funds can be used to help unsheltered homeless, sheltered homeless, or those at risk of homelessness. They can also be used for eviction prevention assistance, including rapid rehousing, housing counseling, and rental deposit assistance.

In addition to these grants, there are several other ways Missourians can receive COVID-19 related housing assistance.

Moratoriums and Evictions

Under the CARES Act, a moratorium on foreclosures for all federally- backed mortgages, including those covered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Federal Housing Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac was put in place for 60 days starting March 18th.

Under the bill, a borrower with a federally-backed mortgage experiencing a financial hardship due to COVID-19 may also request a forbearance for up to 180 days. The bill also instituted a moratorium on filings for evictions for renters in homes covered by a federally-backed mortgage for 120 days.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)

The CARES Act provides $900 million in supplemental funding to LIHEAP to assist low-income families in paying their utility bills.

At the state level, Governor Parson's administration worked with the investor-owned utility companies throughout Missouri to stop disconnects and shut-offs related to COVID-19, ensuring that Missourians would not have disruptions in utility services in the face of economic hardship.

On April 1, the Missouri Supreme Court and several judicial circuits also announced they would suspend or postpone proceedings that include eviction or foreclosure cases until May 15, 2020.

Also during today's briefing Governor Parson was joined by Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Margie Vandeven, Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD) Commissioner Zora Mulligan, and Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance (DCI) Chlora Lindley-Myers for updates on their respective departments.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

In addition to urging school leaders to think of safe ways to honor Missouri's graduating seniors, DESE also issued guidance on summer school to school leaders last week. Districts and charter schools are working to find the best solution they can for their students, families, and staff members.

DESE is also preparing to distribute millions of dollars from the CARES Act to local schools in the coming weeks.

Today, DESE submitted the final U.S. Department of Education paperwork necessary to receive the $208 million Missouri is getting from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. These funds will allow school leaders to address remote teaching and learning challenges and other important educational needs resulting from COVID-19.

Missouri schools will also receive $117 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reimburse schools for meals served during these extended closures. More than 1.3 million meals have been served by schools across Missouri.

Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development

DHEWD continues to work with Governor Parson and DESE to plan the distribution of federal funds through the CARES Act. The CARES Act provides approximately $30 billion to the US Department of Education (USDE) to disperse across several funds. Two of these provide funds related to higher education – the Higher Education Emergency Education Relief Fund (HERF) and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund.

HERF provides money institutions can use for COVID-19 relief. These funds flow directly from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) to schools and must be used for costs that are related to significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to COVID-19. Missouri will also receive $54.6 million through GEER. These funds will allow the state to provide emergency support for K-12 schools and/or higher education institutions significantly impacted by COVID-19.

DHEWD has also issued temporary guidance to students and counselors regarding state financial aid program eligibility due to school closures and changes in ACT test dates. This guidance addresses both A+ and Bright Flight scholarships.

From a workforce development standpoint, DHEWD is working with other state agencies and private partners to ensure Missouri has the workforce it needs to respond to COVID-19, including the training of health care workers at alternate care sites and recruitment of contact tracers to help track and limit exposure to COVID-19.

Missouri Job Centers and local workforce development boards are working to help Missourians skill up and get back to work. Job Centers offer reemployment services to those laid off due to COVID-19 and training assistance to those who qualify. These services include resume and interview preparation as well as assistance with job searching.

Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, DCI has worked closely with the Governor's Office and others in state government to remove regulatory barriers allowing more individuals to work in Missouri and help address the health and welfare of Missourians.

The Department has waived a historic 114 statutes or regulations for the 41 regulatory Boards in its Professional Registration Division alone. DCI has also filed or is in the process of filing five emergency rules related to COVID-19. These waivers have allowed the state to broaden the scope and number of healthcare workers who can provide services in Missouri.

Additionally, DCI issued a bulletin enabling the issuance of temporary resident insurer producer licenses for the various lines of insurance business. These licenses assisted those looking for work in the industry but who were unable to complete the testing requirement as testing centers were closed due to stay at home and social distancing orders. To date, there have been over 80 of these temporary licenses issued in Missouri.

DCI has also issued several bulletins asking insurance carriers operating in Missouri to waive cost sharing for COVID-19 related testing, office visits, urgent care visits, and emergency room visits and has encouraged the use of telehealth services to render care while still maintaining social distancing.

Pictures from today's briefing are available on Governor Parson's **Flickr page (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.flickr.com_photos_govmikeparson_albums_72157714109117227&d=DwMFaQ&c=GSntNbUav5AC0JJIyPOufmfQT3u3zI7UKdoVzPd-7og&r=ep_vY_YZvQO4gTTTzhrHgwLWzZKFmXwbuV1ci7zYS-A&m=Ec_aGnC_-RMANlWCqh7DweIi0HkRMqnopOFDUluoSfo&s=IBDtUL5xN5WZvl4DbBPRyHZ47erWdUPVRzMN1ko8ido&e=)**.

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