GOVERNOR NORTHAM ANNOUNCES $524 MILLION IN NEW FUNDING FOR VIRGINIA RENT RELIEF PROGRAM

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FEDERAL STIMULUS FUNDS AVAILABLE TO HELP LANDLORDS AND TENANTS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ARLINGTON—Governor Ralph Northam today announced $524 million in new federal funding to help keep Virginia families in their homes amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Virginia Rent Relief Program (RRP) is funded through the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program included in the recent federal stimulus package and will assist households and landlords with rent payments to avoid eviction. Governor Northam made the announcement at Gilliam Place Apartments, which is owned by the nonprofit organization Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have prioritized efforts to keep Virginians safely in their homes," said Governor Northam. "There continues to be an overwhelming need for additional relief to help those struggling to make ends meet. This new federal funding will provide an important lifeline to individuals and families, and bolster our ongoing work to address housing affordability in the Commonwealth. I urge eligible households to act quickly and work with their landlords to seek rental assistance through this program."

Virginia is immediately putting $160 million into the RRP to increase housing stability across the Commonwealth and will make additional funding available based upon need. The program will be administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

In June 2020, Virginia was one of the first states in the nation to create a statewide rent and mortgage relief program with federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds. To date, the Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) has distributed over $83.7 million in 24,294 rent and mortgage payments for households throughout the Commonwealth. Families with children represent the majority of households assisted by the program. Governor Northam and the General Assembly allocated Virginia Housing Trust Funds to continue supporting the program prior to this new federal allocation.

“RRP is based on a unique, collaborative partnership between tenants and landlords to ensure both remain whole amid the pandemic,” said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Brian Ball. “Our priority remains keeping our families in stable housing while also ensuring landlords are receiving the payments they need.”

The new ERA funding does not include mortgage relief, so the RMRP that has been operating since June will become the RRP and will no longer accept applications for assistance with mortgage payments. Earlier today, the Biden Administration announced an expansion and extension of federal forbearance and foreclosure relief programs.

In addition, Chesterfield County and Fairfax County will operate their own ERA-funded rent relief programs for their residents. Virginia tenants outside Chesterfield and Fairfax Counties struggling to pay rent are encouraged to reach out to their landlords for the quickest path to rental assistance. To submit a landlord-initiated application, visit virginiahousing.com/rentrelief. Virginia law requires landlords to work with their tenant to apply for this assistance.

Tenants interested in applying should check their eligibility by completing the self-assessment at dhcd.virginia.gov/eligibility or by dialing 2-1-1 from their phones. Tenants may be eligible for rent arrears payments back to April 1, 2020 and up to three months of payments into the future. The total payments may not exceed 15 months of rental assistance per household.

“Maintaining housing for all Virginians is in the interest of public health,” said Senator Janet Howell, Chair of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee. “This additional funding is vital to providing rent relief to prevent evictions and get financially distressed Virginians back on track with rent payments.”

“This program has been critical to addressing and preventing evictions for thousands of Virginians,” said Delegate Luke Torian, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. “Continued funding of this program is necessary to prevent gaps in assistance for Virginians who are facing unprecedented challenges in the face of this pandemic.”

Current state and federal eviction protections through the courts do not prevent rent payments from accumulating. The Commonwealth remains focused on helping eligible households access resources to maintain housing stability during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the future. Additional information on RRP is available at dhcd.virginia.gov/RRP. For additional housing resources, visit StayHomeVirginia.com.

Watch the video of this announcement here.

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