

April 6 2020, *Via Electronic Mail* – governorpolis@state.co.us

The Honorable Jared Polis
Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax Room 136
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Polis,

We are writing to support the Writ of Mandamus filed in court to mandate the State of Colorado use their given authority to mandate the use of empty houses, apartments, and hotels as safe housing for people who are homeless during this COVID emergency.

Currently at least 9,619 Coloradans are homeless, living in large congregations in shelter facilities with no possible way, despite their best efforts, to follow current guidelines for health and safety supported by every world and United States health organization. Hundreds of people are living in close quarters, sharing the same bathroom, sleeping on mats a few feet away, traveling to shelters in packed buses, eating at long tables with hundreds of others, standing in lines, and touching all the same surfaces.

Meanwhile, the State of Colorado has issued a “stay at home” order to protect the people of Colorado. Homeless Coloradans are forced to violate this emergency safety order every day because they have no home to “stay at home” in. Homeless Coloradans are further forced to violate orders to avoid gathering in groups of no more than 10, maintain 6 feet distance, as well as guidance to wash their hands regularly, and self-quarantine when sick.

By not providing housing for those without in this COVID-19 emergency, the State of Colorado is endangering the lives of all Coloradans, housed and unhoused. Conditions in day and night shelters are breeding grounds for this deadly virus, and will help it spread like wildfire through our communities. The majority of homeless people are elders, disabled, immunocompromised, or otherwise have pre-existing health conditions that place them in high risk categories -- they are more likely to get seriously ill, and even die, from Covid-19.

It is not enough to only house people who are showing signs or symptoms of the virus, or who have tested positive, because people without symptoms are still capable of spreading this virus. People across Colorado are being ordered to stay home, whether or not they have symptoms. All homeless persons need rooms where they can socially distance themselves from others, and where their basic needs for safety, rest, and sanitation can be met. If we don't act fast to get all people in safe housing, the virus could quickly spread across the homeless community, and beyond throughout the housed community.

The Governor of Colorado is given the authority in a state of emergency to “commandeer or utilize any private property if the governor finds this necessary to cope with the disaster emergency;” and to “Make provision for the availability and use of temporary emergency housing [C.R.S. 24-33.5-704\(7\)\(e\)](#).”

As is articulated in the Writ of Mandamus, we are demanding that you, the Governor of Colorado, use this given authority immediately to mandate empty and vacant houses, apartments, hotels, and other

forms of safe, individual and family, housing be opened up and used to protect the people of Colorado. Enough housing is sitting vacant and unused across Colorado for every homeless Coloradan to have a safe place to live. Unlike the shortage of COVID testing to meet the need, the need for safe private housing can be met by existing stock right now.

We, the people of Colorado, are depending on you to act NOW to declare the use of empty housing for this emergency to protect the lives of all without housing in Colorado.

Attachments: see Writ of Mandamus re Housing filed 4/1/2020, and pictures of shelter conditions.

Sincerely,

The Homeless Community of Colorado and the undersigned organizations (*as of April 6nd 2020, more every day...*)

6th Ave United Church of Christ
ARM
Abolish Ice Denver
American Friends Service Community
Arvadans for Progressive Action
Black Educators Caucus
Black Lives Matter 5280
Boulder Rights Watch
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Cities Of Refuge Denver
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Colorado Cultural Research Associates
Colorado Latino Forum
Colorado People's Alliance
Colorado Rent Strike and Eviction Defense
Colorado Village Collaborative
Colorado Cross Disability Coalition
Community Compassion Outreach, Durango
Denver Artists for Rent Control
Denver Black Educators Caucus
Denver Catholic Worker
Denver Democratic Socialists of America
Denver Homeless Out Loud
Durango Food Not Bombs
Fort Collins Homeless Coalition
Front Range Mutual Aid Network
Grand Junction Mutual Aid
Grand Junction Solidarity Not Charity

Harm Reduction Action Center
Indivisible Denver
Indigenous Voices of the Poor People's Campaign
IJ5WUX
Juniper Formation
National Coalition for the Homeless
NEDFans
Neighbors of Overland North
Party for Socialism and Liberation
Red Owl Law, P.C.
Resurrection Clothing
Safe Access for Everyone
The Arc of Aurora
The Buck Foundation
The Initiative
Unite North Metro Denver
Warm Cookies of the Revolution
Western Regional Advocacy Project

Plus 208 individuals...

(Please also note a separate letter sent to you on March 23rd by 167 faith communities and organizations similarly calling for you to provide housing for all without in this crisis. Also note the Common Good demands which include this very demand to open housing for the houseless signed on by 54 organizations and elected officials.)

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