



**APRIL 28, 2020**

**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE APARTMENT AND OFFICE BUILDING ASSOCIATION OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON IN SUPPORT OF A SPECIAL APPROPRIATION TO THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT’S FY20 OPERATING BUDGET, \$2,000,000 COVID-19 HUMAN SERVICES RESPONSE AND COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE**

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA) is a non-profit trade association representing more than 133,000 apartment units and over 23 million square feet of office space in suburban Maryland. Here, in the County, AOBA members own/manage over 60,000 of the [County’s estimated 83,769 rental units](#) and 20,00,000 square feet of office space. *AOBA is pleased to submit this statement in support of the special appropriation of \$2 million for emergency rental assistance.*

AOBA members are deeply committed to working with the many residents impacted by COVID-19 as we work together to get through this crisis. Already, our data shows that a significant percentage of residents across our Maryland member portfolio are unable to pay their rent, numbers we sadly expect to increase significantly beginning in May. Data from the National Multifamily Housing Council also demonstrates that housing providers are facing alarming numbers with regards to the number of tenants affected by this crisis. [Nearly a Third of U.S. Apartment Renters Didn’t Pay April Rent](#). AOBA and its members are committed to working with those residents in need and increasing existing measures to ensure our residents and their families the security of their homes. However, the longer this crisis continues, the greater the need for substantial public sector investment in emergency rental assistance programs.

AOBA thus commends the Council for its leadership in providing such assistance to residents in rental housing communities. The \$2 million appropriation will provide necessary and immediate relief for those residents who are impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and struggle to cover housing expenses. Boosting existing or creating short-term state and local financial assistance to renter households enables individuals and families to overcome temporary financial challenges that would otherwise result in delinquencies and ultimate loss of their housing. Importantly, such assistance also helps stabilize rental communities facing low rent collections. Rental housing

communities continue to play a critical role during this crisis as residents stay at home to slow the spread of COVID-19. However, most projections indicate many will face declining rent collections – the primary source of revenue, with May rents. Housing providers thus face an uncertain future and are struggling to keep their own employees and maintain and operate their communities. Boosting rental assistance thus not only provides relief to renters but also helps housing providers facing financial challenges continue to keep their own employees and maintain and operate their communities.

However, the enormity of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 on both residents and housing providers requires a combination of direct emergency rental assistance from the County, state and federal governments. AOBA emphasizes the importance of state and federal funds to supplement the County's efforts. For example, we continue to advocate for substantial funding by Congress for rental assistance programs. AOBA encourages both the Council and the County Executive to add your voices to the calls for Congress to pass additional relief and stimulus legislation that includes direct rental assistance funding. More than ever, we are one community and AOBA and its members will continue actively working with our public sector partners to get through this unprecedented crisis.

### **BACKGROUND – EXAMPES OF OTHER JURISDICTIONS IN THE REGION**

The **Loudoun County Board of Supervisors** has reallocated \$200,000 from its Eastern Loudoun County Home Revitalization Program to form a rental assistance program to ensure housing stability for low-income workers who have been furloughed, become unemployed, or had work hours reduced due to COVID-19. Tenants who are current in their rent payments as of March 30 may qualify. Assistance of up to three months' rent is available to households earning up to 70% of the state median income (\$60,332 for a family of 4). Direct payments are made by the County to property management companies on behalf of residents who qualify for the program. Applicants will need to verify income eligibility, conduct a case assessment, verify rent need and job impacts related to COVID-19. Additionally, they will be asked to submit related documents, including a current lease and paperwork showing job loss or reduced income. Click [here](#) for more information on the County's rental assistance program for households impacted by COVID-19.