



RI's Eviction Rating .38 out of 5 Stars

Source: Eviction Lab Housing Policy Scorecard, evictionlab.org

May 27, 2020

Protection of the public's health, economic recovery and the prevention of a recession require immediate action to keep people in their homes.

Without an uniform eviction moratorium that covers all Rhode Islanders and substantial rental assistance, the economic stability of low-income tenants and landlords alike will collapse. A recent report published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston found that Rhode Island tenants unable to make their rent payments between April and July could number in the tens of thousands and the economic impact of this crisis could destabilize the state's housing market.

Rhode Island is falling behind other states in protecting housing stability for tenants and economic recovery for landlords. Below is a list of states whose Governors have enacted eviction moratoriums through executive action:

Alabama	Eviction moratorium "for the duration of the public health emergency unless rescinded or extended by proclamation"
Alaska	Eviction moratorium "through June 30"
Arizona	Eviction moratorium "through July 22, only applies to tenants unable to pay rent due to the virus or due to quarantine"
Connecticut	Eviction moratorium until July 1, with 60 day grace period for April and May 2020 rent available
Delaware	Eviction moratorium "Until the state of emergency is terminated and the public health emergency is rescinded"
Illinois	"Cease enforcement of eviction orders for the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation"
Indiana	Eviction moratorium "for the duration of the state of emergency"
Iowa	Suspension of evictions and notices to quit during the duration of the proclamation
Maine	Eviction moratorium until 30 days after end of public health emergency
Maryland	Eviction moratorium for the duration of the state of emergency
Minnesota	Eviction moratorium until the peacetime emergency is terminated or rescinded by the proper authority
Nevada	Suspension of eviction filings and activities during the state of emergency
New Hampshire	Eviction moratorium for the duration of the state of emergency
New York	Governor extends eviction moratorium until August 20
Oregon	Eviction moratorium through July 1

Eviction Diversion

Protects Public Health
Stabilizes Housing
Supports Economic Recovery

What is Eviction Diversion?

An Eviction Diversion program in the District Court will assist residential landlords and tenants in the same way that the COVID-19 Business Recovery Plan is assisting small businesses in the Superior Court. A pre-filing Eviction Diversion program for non-payment cases arising on or after March 1, 2020 can keep renters in their homes while ensuring that tenants and landlords are receiving appropriate financial relief and benefiting from a uniform approach to expectations for negotiating repayment agreements. This program will provide renters with stable housing and landlords with fair, feasible, and consistent repayment plans.

Public Health Impact

A pre-filing Eviction Diversion program has the dual public health benefits of minimizing unsafe crowding at the court and preventing the dislocation of thousands of Rhode Islanders from their homes.

Before COVID-19, the District Court schedule included dozens of eviction hearings per day, along with a high volume of other civil and criminal matters. Courtrooms would reach capacity, and hallways would be filled with litigants, witnesses, lawyers, and family members. This does not support the currently prevailing public health requirements of social distancing and hygiene.

How It Would Work

Landlords and tenants should be encouraged to safely resolve their dispute through mediation before arriving at the courthouse. All non-payment cases originate from a 5-day demand for rent. This touchpoint presents an ideal time to notify tenants of an opportunity to avoid eviction by participating in a pre-filing mediation to address non-payment. Tenants would contact the mediation program and schedule a phone or web-based mediation conference. Mediators will assist the parties and have the ability to access rental assistance resources to close the gap in resolving the matter. If no agreement can be reached, the landlord would receive a certificate authorizing the filing of a 9-day eviction. Similarly, an eviction filing would be authorized if a mediated agreement is breached.

**An estimated
18,869
households in
Rhode Island
may be unable to
pay \$19,586,713
in rent each
month between
April and
July.**

These catastrophic costs will deepen as federally enhanced unemployment ends in July and record unemployment persists well beyond July. These households are at risk of eviction because COVID-19 compelled businesses and employers to cease most operations.

**Rhode Island's
unemployment
rate more than
tripled during the
month of April
to a rate of 17%,
compared to just
3.6% in April
2019.**

Rhode Island has lost nearly 100,000 jobs since February. While some renters have received unemployment payments and stimulus checks, many have not. Even those who have received this support have fallen behind in their rent. The tragic consequences and unacceptable public health risks of residential evictions approaching these numbers cannot be overstated.

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