



City of Long Beach
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Date: March 22, 2022

R-19

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilwoman Suzie Price, Third District
Councilwoman Stacy Mungo, Fifth District
Councilman Al Austin, Eighth District

Subject: Request for Report on Rental Assistance Program and Feasibility
of Expanding Eligibility

RECOMMENDATION:

Requests the City Manager to work with Development Services Department as well as our legislative delegations in Washington and Sacramento to report back to the City Council on the status of tenant rental assistance payments, and the feasibility of opportunities to expedite payments, and advocate to expand those eligible to receive rental assistance.

BACKGROUND:

As the historic COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact residents all across Long Beach as well as worldwide it is important for us to continue looking at policies and opportunities for advocacy that may better serve the ongoing needs of Long Beach residents. Therefore, frequent updates to the City Council on programs like the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (LB-ERAP) should be provided to the City Council. Additionally, information on how Long Beach can advocate to our state and federal representatives for policy improvements to potentially expand eligibility for those who may need rental assistance but be ineligible under current restrictions.

Throughout the COVID-19 emergency we have reassessed policies, and applied updates as the nature of the emergency has changed, or the expectations of its impacts developed. Policies that were initially not intended to last for more than a few months, are now approaching their third year, and as a result impacts and unintended results have become clear. In building on the City Council's action from October 5, 2021 seeking to streamline the application process for rental assistance¹, and City staff's efforts to improve efficiency of the ERAP program², further discussions on opportunities for Long Beach residents to be supported by important rental assistance is warranted.

¹ <http://longbeach.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9859930&GUID=DB7AD282-8E6D-4004-834E-B0DA00D469D9>

² <https://longbeach.gov/globalassets/city-manager/media-library/documents/memos-to-the-mayor-tabbed-file-list-folders/2022/january--28--2022---long-beach-emergency-rental-assistance-program--lb-erap--and-keep-long-beach-housed-update>



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The City of Long Beach has received multiple rounds of funding to assist tenants with paying back their deferred rent. These funds have not been fully allocated to Long Beach residents. Additionally, there are situations where tenants applied and received partial funding yet more is needed. However, until Phase 1 monies are exhausted the tenant and landlord have to wait to apply for more funds under Phase 2. These are a few of the challenges this important program continues to face. Additionally, as this emergency has continued it would be advantageous to residents still being impacted by COVID-19 and by reduced income, for Long beach to advocate to our federal and state delegation to change the current income level requirement eligibility. This requirement means that only tenants who make less than 80% of the area median income can apply and receive funds. This income barrier leaves out a great many tenants who are still struggling to pay back rent.

With these details in mind it would be appropriate for the City of Long Beach to receive a report on the status of rental repayment funds, and opportunities for there to be greater access to rental assistance for Long Beach residents in need by advocating to our state and federal delegations.

This matter has been reviewed by Budget Analysis Officer Greg Sorensen on March 7, 2022.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The recommendation requests the City Manager to work with Development Services Department as well as our legislative delegations in Washington and Sacramento to report back to the City Council on the status of tenant rental assistance payments, and the feasibility of opportunities to expedite payments, and advocate to expand those eligible to receive rental assistance. The requested action is anticipated to have a minimal impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and a minimal impact on existing City Council Priorities