

# VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

## POVERTY LAW PROJECT

56 COLLEGE STREET

MONTPELIER, VERMONT 05602  
(802) 223-6377 (VOICE AND TTY)

FAX (802) 223-7281  
(800) 789-4195

OFFICES:

BURLINGTON  
RUTLAND  
ST. JOHNSBURY

OFFICES:

MONTPELIER  
SPRINGFIELD

March 26, 2020

Chairman Thomas Stevens and Committee Members

### **Regarding moratorium on evictions, foreclosures, writs of possession**

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for an across the board moratorium on evictions during this public health crisis. At the present time, everyone is affected by COVID-19.

The goal of Sec. 9 is to stop all evictions during the emergency period. Eviction is where, through court process, a landlord calls on the authority of the state to involuntarily remove someone from their home. No one, for any reason, should be removed from their home by eviction during this public health crisis.

In State fiscal year 2019, in the usual course of business, there were about 1800 evictions, and 852 mortgage foreclosures filed in Vermont. That is about 150 evictions a month. In a public health crisis, there can be no business as usual.

The proposed legislation puts a pause on all evictions and foreclosures, while preserving landlord's right to file cases that can be pursued once the public health crisis is over. Rental assistance money, and increased services for tenants can help resolve many of those cases.

The bill aims to stop "service in hand" – currently required at several steps in court process. Service of court documents put the personnel of Sheriff and Constables at risk for spreading contagion.

Staying cases stays answer deadlines, meaning defendant tenants don't have to navigate closed court-house doors in order to preserve their right to a fair adjudication of the issues.

Please put evictions on pause until the public health crisis is past, because everyone needs to stay home and stay safe.

Thank you

Jean L. Murray  
Staff Attorney  
jmurray@vtlegalaid.org