

## **Emergency Rental Assistance is Child Centered Pandemic Relief**

Children across Idaho are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress as they navigate new ways to attend school, limited opportunities to socialize, and the emotional toll of living during a global pandemic. Parents are bearing the burden of struggling to financially support their children due to circumstances outside of their control. These pressures will impact our children in ways we have yet to understand.

However, we have an opportunity to relieve some of their burden by providing rental assistance to mitigate the negative impacts of housing instability, eviction, and homelessness being felt across the state. It is the responsibility of our Legislature to make these resources available as soon as possible to protect Idaho's children from experiencing any additional, preventable hardship. ***It is the right thing to do.***

The state of Idaho received \$175 million in emergency rental assistance in the federal coronavirus relief package passed in December. This assistance can be used to help families impacted by the coronavirus pay for up to 12 months of future and past-due rent and utility payments once it has been approved by the Idaho State Legislature. Idaho's lawmakers must immediately approve these funds to ensure Idaho's renters – and especially Idaho's children – do not experience eviction or homelessness as a result of the coronavirus. ***It is the right thing to do.***

Idaho's children are disproportionately impacted by housing instability and will benefit greatly from emergency rental assistance. Data collected in December by the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 34,000 households in Idaho were unable to pay rent. National trends indicate that nearly half of children in renter households are facing food and/or housing hardship. Ensuring families have access to emergency rental assistance is one of the most effective ways of keeping Idaho's children housed, healthy, and happy. ***This is good for Idaho's kids.***

The impacts of housing instability, evictions, and homelessness are traumatic and follow children for the rest of their lives. For example, children facing housing instability are more likely to be suspended from school or held back, drop out early, change schools more often, and have lower test scores. These outcomes did not take the new challenges of virtual learning into account.

Families with an eviction on their record also face additional barriers to accessing safe and affordable homes in the future - leading many families to experiencing homelessness, "doubling up" with other families, or moving into homes that are unsafe or unaffordable. These situations all negatively impact the development of children.

Emergency rental assistance helps families with children regain financial stability, which creates positive ripple effects throughout the families and their communities. Relieving the burden of unpaid rent will give parents the financial security to purchase nutritious food for their family, schedule medical check-ups for their children, or pay for daycare when they go back to work. These are all essential to ensuring children can thrive. ***This is good for Idaho's kids.*** Please contact your legislators and ask that they ensure that rental assistance funds are released immediately as February rent is already past due.