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Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7000 dated August 21, 2020 Extends Eviction Moratorium to October 1, 2020 and Increases Funding for Housing Assistance Programs

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by Michael A. Ceccorulli and Steven J. Stafstrom

On August 21, 2020, Governor Lamont made two significant announcements on matters that will affect landlords and tenants in Connecticut.

The Governor announced and later issued a new executive order (E.O. 7000) that will extend the current residential eviction moratorium to October 1. The moratorium has been in place since April, and our firm had previously provided details regarding its imposition and prior extension here and here. In his announcement, the Governor noted that neighboring states had already passed similar moratoria: New York until October 1, New Jersey until October 5, and Massachusetts until October 17 (though, notably, Rhode Island has not imposed an executive moratorium as of this date). The moratorium does not apply to commercial leases, and evictions on commercial leases may proceed in the courts, though delays have arisen due to court closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to statements released by the Judicial Branch, housing mediators employed by the court will soon begin meeting with parties in commercial eviction cases via remote technology to try to work out agreements on these cases. Judicial Branch officials continue to work on strategies to safely resume jury trials.

In addition to this executive action, the Governor announced he is doubling funding (from \$10 million to \$20 million) for the planned rental assistance program for Connecticut residents impacted by COVID-19. The program is funded by the State's Coronavirus Relief Fund and is designed to provide payments to landlords on behalf of approved tenant applicants.

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This additional funding brings the total amount of state funding for renters, homeowners, and residential landlords impacted by COVID-19 up to \$43.3 million. In addition to the \$20 million rental assistance program, this includes funding for mortgage relief to homeowners (\$10 million), support for renters who were facing eviction before the pandemic (\$5 million), rehousing for people exiting homelessness or incarceration (\$5.8 million), and support for renters excluded from federal assistance because of their or their loved ones' immigration status (\$2.5 million). Connecticut's large cities also received \$10 million under the CARES Act Emergency Solution Grants program to prevent homelessness and support homeless populations.

While Connecticut presently has one of the lowest COVID-19 transmission rates in the United States, it was among the first states most significantly impacted by the pandemic and has been among the most active in its efforts to mitigate potential residential housing impacts for residents.

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