April 21, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1303 10th St Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Emergency Order to Provide relief for Students in Off-campus housing

Dear Governor Newsom,

Young Invincibles and our partner organizations write to respectfully request that you sign an executive order that will permit students who live in off-campus housing to vacate their leases without penalty.

As a result of the recent health crisis, you have enacted several effective measures to assist California’s most affected residents. We applaud your swift response to this crisis and your efforts to mitigate economic hardships to Californians. We are requesting you take a second look at an often-overlooked population -- our California college students.

Students enrolled at colleges and universities across the state have been dramatically affected by this health crisis. The transition to distance learning has jolted many, and this disruption -- coupled with job loss and lack of economic security -- has been challenging for many students to overcome. Now is the time to ensure that students in this state have access to the basic needs that will help them persist through college and onto graduation and employment.

We are seeking to proactively avoid young people who graduate college having to enter adulthood with damaged credit, poor rental history, or -- even worse -- eviction. While the eviction moratorium is a step in the right direction, college students need more than to delay their rent payments, as they are in a unique situation. Their campuses are closed, they have lost on- or near-campus jobs, and are separated from their families. By no fault of their own, many off-campus students have suddenly become unable to continue with
their current lease. Because of this, many students have been forced to abandon apartments in an effort to shelter in place with parents. Additionally, some parents are struggling to pay rent or mortgages for their own homes while also paying for their student’s apartment in another location.

This problem is widespread. Between 11% and 16% of CSU students live in on-campus housing, which means the vast majority of CSU students live off-campus.

Federal IPEDS data show that in 2018, the UC system had a dorm capacity of 93,053, while the total undergraduate full-time enrollment for that same time period was 209,354. Dorm capacity therefore could at maximum house just 44% of enrolled students systemwide.

Governor Newsom, we urge you to act immediately via executive order, to permit students who are enrolled as at least half-time students to be permitted to vacate their leases without financial penalty and without negative rental history marks. We have attached stories from students across the state, a letter from Riverside Fair Housing, as well as an article about students in Orange County who are all facing these similar circumstances.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you to resolve this important issue for college students statewide.

Respectfully,

Kristin McGuire
Regional Director
Western Region Office

CC:
The Honorable Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins
The Honorable Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
The Honorable Senate President and Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis
The Honorable Jose Medina, Chair, California State Assembly Committee on Higher Education
The Honorable David Chiu, Chair, California State Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development
The Honorable Connie M. Leyva, Chair, California State Senate Education Committee
The Honorable Scott Wiener, Chair, California State Senate Housing Committee
Ann O’Leary, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Daniel Seeman, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of the Governor

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