

Remarks by Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo at the White House and Department of Justice's Eviction Prevention Convening with Law Schools

January 28, 2022

As prepared for delivery

Let me start for thanking you for your commitment to helping prevent evictions in our country during the pandemic. Today, there are families that remain in their homes, children that are still in their schools, and communities that have been held together because of our Emergency Rental Assistance program and the hard work and determination of the people in this room.

The work you've all committed yourselves to—providing legal services to families in need to help prevent evictions—matters immensely. Research has found that housing instability increases the risk of job loss by as much as 22 percentage points. For children, studies show housing instability leads to poor health and lower educational attainment, effects that can compound over time to reinforce inequality.

The pandemic's economic effects have left millions of vulnerable Americans facing deep rental debt, the threat of eviction, and the loss of basic housing security. Over the course of the last year, the Biden Administration has provided over \$46 billion to prevent evictions as part of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Today, just over one year into the Biden Administration, ERA programs around the country have provided over 3 million payments to households, helping Americans remain in their homes. Eviction Lab data shows that in the four full months since the end of the eviction moratorium in August, eviction filings have remained below 60% of historical levels.

This program is working, keeping families safely housed. But that success depends on the help of people like you in communities around our country. As I travel around the country to meet people that are still in their homes because of ERA, they are all grateful for the support from the federal government, but even more grateful for the members of their community, like you, who have shown up to help them during their darkest hour.

Putting Americans in a position to preserve their communities through the pandemic and invest in each other is exactly why the President proposed the American Rescue Plan. Today, as a result of these efforts, we have built a nationwide infrastructure for rental assistance and eviction prevention that did not exist prior to the pandemic, and that will persist even after the pandemic is in the rearview mirror.

We hope the tools state and local governments have built to implement the Emergency Rental Assistance program will be the lasting legacy of our response to the pandemic, creating models to address issues that existed even before this crisis.

But before we can focus on the future, we must continue the hard work of preventing evictions during the pandemic.

We need your help continuing to advocate for state and local governments across the country to adopt practices that have a proven track record of helping rental assistance funds reach households in need.

One of the most important practices Treasury recommends is the use of eviction diversion programs—partnerships between local court systems and legal aid providers that help tenants facing eviction to understand their rights, take advantage of emergency rental assistance, and stay in their homes—programs you'll hear more about shortly from Associate Attorney General Gupta.

This is where you and your institutions come in. Many of the law schools here today have played a pivotal role in supporting and staffing these programs. I know firsthand from my own experience as a student in a law school clinic that the work you are doing not only improves lives, it can be one of the most meaningful experiences you have in law school.

The opportunity to work directly with families facing eviction from their homes, to help them through the legal process and give them the opportunity to keep the roof over their heads, is something you will never forget.

So, again, thank you for all the work you have done and will continue to do to prevent evictions and support our communities.

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