



## Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency

### Contra Costa County



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **California COVID-19 Rent Relief Program Highlights Partnership with Contra Costa County, Announces Improvements to Application Process**

***Rent relief application has undergone extensive streamlining, and website portal is now in six languages, and the state has increased the number of Community-Based Organizations to over 100.***

ANTIOCH – Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) Secretary Lourdes Castro Ramírez and Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Director Gustavo Velasquez held a news conference today to highlight the California COVID-19 Rent Relief program’s partnership with Contra Costa County, to announce significant improvements to the rent relief program, including enhancing the application experience, and bringing in more Community-Based Organizations to assist with education and outreach.

“The success of the California COVID-19 Rent Relief program depends on partnerships like the one we have with Contra Costa County and our Local Partner Network organizations to reach those hardest-hit by COVID-19,” said BCSH Secretary Castro Ramírez. “Contra Costa County has been an outstanding partner from the very beginning and has moved aggressively to bring on local community-based organizations to assist residents in applying for rent relief.”

“Contra Costa County appreciates the state’s partnership in implementing the Rent Relief program that helped residents apply for rent and utilities assistance as early as possible,” said Supervisor Diane Burgis, Chair of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors. “Together with the County’s extensive public outreach and collaboration with community partners, we have assisted renters and landlords to apply for nearly \$50 million to date. With millions already delivered, we look forward to helping many more individuals and families gain back much needed financial and housing stability.”

Partnerships like those with Contra Costa County and community-based organizations across the state have an added importance: their feedback has been instrumental in

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efforts to improve and streamline the rent relief program. As a result of that feedback and new guidance from the U.S. Treasury, two significant improvements have been made to significantly streamline the experience for applicants.

First, the application itself has been drastically simplified. The application has been redesigned for better user experience and it now takes substantially less time to complete – under an hour, where previously it had taken 3-4 hours. The number of documents to upload has also been reduced to 3-4, down from 7-9 previously. And the simplified application now includes screening elements to help reduce the number of questions people need to answer based on their individual needs and circumstances, and there are now in-application tips to help applicants answer the remaining questions. The streamlined application has been tested by representatives from the rent relief programs Local Partner Network, who report it is much easier to get through.

“People who have started applications but have not yet submitted them have been sent an email telling them that the process is now much simpler and inviting them to sign back in and complete their applications,” said HCD Director Velasquez. “People who have already submitted applications do not need to do anything else.”

In addition, the application portal, [HousingIsKey.com](https://www.housingiskey.com), has been made accessible in multiple languages. The entire website has been translated into Spanish, simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and Tagalog. It is the first time that an entire state website has been translated into so many languages.

“We will continue to make improvements as we receive additional input from our stakeholders,” said Director Velasquez. “In the meantime, we urge anyone needing assistance applying for rent relief to contact the California COVID-19 Rent Relief call center, which can provide assistance in more than 200 languages, at 833-430-2122 or visit [HousingIsKey.com](https://www.housingiskey.com).”

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