

OVERSIGHT OF PANDEMIC EVICTIONS:
ASSESSING ABUSES BY CORPORATE
LANDLORDS AND FEDERAL EFFORTS
TO KEEP AMERICANS IN THEIR HOMES

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS
CRISIS
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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OVERSIGHT OF PANDEMIC EVICTIONS: ASSESSING ABUSES BY CORPORATE LANDLORDS AND FEDERAL EFFORTS TO KEEP AMERICANS IN THEIR HOMES

Tuesday, July 27, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS
Washington, D.C.

The select subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:40 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. James Clyburn (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Clyburn, Waters, Velázquez, Foster, Krishnamoorthi, Scalise, Jordan, Green, and Miller-Meeks.

Mr. CLYBURN. [Presiding] Good morning. The House Committee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any time.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

We are here today to discuss an issue of utmost importance: ensuring that the coronavirus pandemic, which has already resulted in a loss of life for more than 600,000 Americans, does not result in the loss of stable homes for millions more. As the coronavirus pandemic ravaged the Nation, millions of Americans lost their jobs and faced significant challenges making ends meet. For these Americans, one of the most pressing challenges has been ensuring that the loss of a job does not also mean the loss of a roof over their families' heads. Even as the American economy continues to recover, millions of American families still live in fear of falling behind on their rent and being forced from their homes. Adding to this fear are the aggressive and unjustified eviction practices by some landlords. I am deeply troubled by reports that many large corporate landlords have been aggressively and unfairly attempting to remove thousands of Americans from their homes during this pandemic.

Court records show that multiple large corporate landlords, some of whom control tens of thousands of rental units, have moved to evict large numbers of their tenants over the course of the pandemic, despite the CDC eviction moratorium and the availability of rental assistance funds. One large landlord, for example, has filed to evict over 2,000 tenants during the pandemic, totaling over a quarter of that company's tenants. Evictions by corporate landlords have been particularly widespread in minority communities.

In view of this information, the select subcommittee has initiated an investigation into some of the large corporate landlords alleged to be engaged in these practices. This investigation will seek to find out whether these large landlords are refusing to cooperate with rental assistance programs and attempting to force families out of their homes unfairly and needlessly. Let me be clear. The aggressive actions of these large corporate landlords are unacceptable. They must stop immediately.

These evictions are especially unacceptable because they are unnecessary. Congress has taken action to ensure that renters experiencing hardship can receive financial help to stay in their homes. Of course, the ultimate recipient of these funds are the landlords to whom rent is paid. To date, Congress has appropriated over \$46 billion in emergency rental assistance, including \$21.5 billion from the American Rescue Act so that families affected by the pandemic can pay their rent and stay in their homes. These funds are being distributed through state and local governments who know their communities and housing challenges best.

The Biden-Harris Administration has acted aggressively to protect renters from eviction. Taking a whole-of-government approach to preventing an eviction crisis, the Administration has worked to speed up the distribution of rental assistance funds by states and localities, warned large landlords of their duty to inform tenants of their rights under the CDC moratorium, and urged state courts to divert eviction cases to rental assistance programs to keep people in their homes. The Biden-Harris Administration has also pushed state and local governments to distribute funds effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

While some are still having challenges, several states and localities have done an excellent job in distributing rental relief funds. In Texas, the city of Houston and Harris County have distributed over \$137 million in rental relief funds to over 36,000 families. Virginia has distributed over \$220 million in assistance funds, aiding nearly 33,000 households. And in Kentucky, the Louisville-Jefferson County Rental Assistance Program has disbursed over \$22 million to aid 4,300 households. All states and localities should follow these successful examples and adopt best practices for distributing aid, and landlords must work with tenants and rental assistance programs to avoid needless evictions. The distribution of assistance nationwide is rapidly increasing. Rental assistance funds helped 85,000 households from January to March, 100,000 in April, 160,000 in May, and 290,000 in June. The distribution of funds in June was greater than all previous months combined, and I am confident that this progress is continuing.

When the House returns to session following the August district work period, we plan to invite Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to testify on the implementation of this and all the essential relief programs established by Congress through the American Rescue Plan and previous coronavirus response legislation that are being administered by her Department. I look forward to that hearing and am hopeful the Secretary's schedule will allow her to appear before us. And I know from his recent public statements that the ranking member does as well.

It is equally important that the select subcommittee hear from today's witnesses, who bring a wealth of knowledge and important perspectives on this issue. I look forward to hearing from each of them about the challenges we face. As Americans continue to get vaccinated and our economy continues to improve, we must work together to prevent the pandemic from precipitating an eviction crisis. Congress has already taken action to ensure that American families are not evicted from their homes. We must ensure that the law is followed and the rental assistance funds that Congress provided are accessible to all who need them.

I now yield to the ranking member for his opening statement.

Mr. SCALISE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate you holding this hearing. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

The biggest economic challenge we face right now continues to be President Biden's inflation crisis. The cost of housing, the cost of gasoline, groceries, cars, basic necessities of life have skyrocketed. Rather than addressing the problem and proposing solutions, the Biden Administration's answer is, don't worry, just keep burning more money and hope that inflation will just magically disappear. Mr. Chairman, these huge price spikes are not going to magically disappear, especially when liberals and socialists continue reckless tax and spend policies. The American people know that the massive increase in government spending we have seen in these last few months is responsible for the rising cost of prices that we pay for everyday household items. This, by the way, is a tax on hard-working families. And what is President Biden's answer? He is pushing for an additional \$4 trillion in new taxes and spending, exactly the opposite of what America needs right now.

What America needs at this critical moment is to stay on the path toward fully reopening. We cannot slide backward. Schools must reopen for in-person learning. The costs our children have already paid is too high. Businesses need to continue bringing back employees, and the Federal Government needs to stop paying people more to stay home than to go back to work. The Federal Government needs to stop undermining the relationship between landlord and tenant and let that market function properly.

What has allowed us to get back to some normalcy has not been government spending. It certainly has not been government-imposed lockdowns. That is the opposite of normalcy. What has gotten us back on the path to opening is getting control of this invisible enemy, and America did that by creating, producing, and distributing safe and effective vaccines. As every member of this subcommittee knows, I as ranking member, as well as many of us here, have been advocating for and encouraging vaccines for over a year, and we have also highlighted the success of Operation Warp Speed at bringing multiple vaccines to families in record time. In fact, I called out those who talked down the vaccine during last year when you saw a number of people from President Biden and now Vice President Harris on down who were actually promoting vaccine hesitancy. They ought to come back out and admit they shouldn't have done it, admit that they were wrong in promoting that. In fact, when President Biden took office and created a goal of \$100,000 million shots in a day, which, by the way, we were already on track to administer the day he took office, many

of us said that the President should be more ambitious. He should increase the goal to 200,000 million shots a day. Ultimately, President Biden embraced that goal.

Mr. Chairman, you and I worked together on the vaccine hesitancy hearing. We jointly invited witnesses. Our views have been clear and consistent. If you want to get vaccinated, it is safe, effective, free, and available. But I have also been clear that if the goal is to get more people vaccinated, shaming people and mandating those vaccinations won't work. Censoring the truth won't work either. It only breeds more distrust. Let's all work together to get the facts out to people, particularly populations that continue to display hesitancy. Let's present the evidence but also reassure individuals that the decision is theirs. If someone has a concern or a question, now is the time to have that conversation with their doctor. I believe that strategy will ultimately maximize the number of Americans who choose to take the vaccine because, after all, this is a medical decision, not a political decision.

According to the Mayo Clinic, 87 percent of Americans over the age of 75 have already received at least one dose of vaccine. More than 90 percent of individuals aged 65 to 74 have received at least one dose. Since vaccinations began, emergency room visits related to the virus have declined 77 percent among older adults, and of course, we remember at the outbreak of the pandemic, that was the population that experienced the largest percentage of deaths. Just seniors in nursing homes alone were, at one point, responsible for over 40 percent of deaths when they represented less than one percent of the population. While we are seeing some breakthrough infections—that is, infections that occurred after vaccination—those illnesses tend to be milder than infections among unvaccinated people. We know no vaccine is 100 percent effective, but a very small percentage of vaccinated individuals we know will get sick. We have seen the anecdotal evidence, but that is not evidence that the vaccine does not work.

The Delta variant is spreading at an alarming rate. I am especially now concerned about the new Lambda variant that we are seeing coming from South and Central America. The Biden Administration must address their self-created border crisis. Dr. Fauci actually told this subcommittee that the Biden Administration was violating their own CDC guidance at the border by failing to test for COVID, and for allowing too many people to be crammed into cages, many with COVID, at detention facilities on the border, only to then be shipped around the country and increase the spread of the virus. Many of us talked about this that have gone down and seen the crisis at the border. Border Patrol agents will tell you that many coming across, No. 1, are not being tested for COVID, but, ultimately, as they go into these detention facilities packed together, some have COVID, and then they spread it to everybody else. If an American citizen today went to Mexico for summer vacation, they are not allowed to get on airplane and fly back into America without first having a negative COVID test. Yet someone can have COVID, be positive, come across our border illegally, and be welcomed into the country, and then given a ticket to get on a plane or a bus and sent throughout America, which, by the way,

the Biden Administration won't even tell us where they are going, so communities can't even prepare for this outbreak.

We are running out of time to stop the Lambda variant. In fact, the dangerous Lambda variant is spreading widely in countries like Peru, and now with President Biden's open border crisis, we are seeing many illegals starting to spread COVID's dangerous Lambda variant into America. We just saw a few more cases pop up in Texas, right along the border where people are showing up with the Lambda variant. As we worry about the Delta variant, which is dangerous, we should also be worried about this new Lambda variant that is coming in. And, again, as Dr. Fauci testified in the past, that when President Trump said we are going to stop flights from coming in from China at the beginning of this virus, it saved American lives. Dr. Fauci also said President Trump's decision to stop flights from Europe as Europe was getting an outbreak, that saved American lives, too. I would call on President Biden to look at the numbers of the Lambda variant that are coming in from South America, and he should get control of the southern border to stop the spread of the Lambda variant into America.

We should not be backsliding on reopening. We should not be flooding the economy with trillions more in government spending. We should be scaling back the emergency Federal programs. The eviction moratorium, I do realize that that is the subject of today's hearing, but this eviction moratorium is an actual good example. On September 1, of 2020, the CDC took the unprecedented step of issuing a temporary national moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent under the guise of limiting the spread of COVID-19 and protecting low-income families who were struggling. But, of course, in the December omnibus, Congress appropriated \$25 billion for emergency rental assistance to eliminate that debt. Congress also added an additional \$21 billion in a second emergency rental program via the American Rescue Plan for a total of \$46 billion in emergency rental assistance funds to be distributed by the Biden Administration. Yet, as of the end of June, the Biden Administration pathetically distributed less than 10 percent of this money to renters who are in need of assistance. The Biden Administration has mismanaged this program, and unfortunately, our request to bring in Secretary Yellen today was denied. I am glad to hear she will finally be coming weeks later, but we need those answers today about why that program is being so mismanaged.

The impact of the eviction moratorium has been most heavily felt by mom-and-pop landlords who depend on rental income for their livelihood. The extension of the eviction moratorium at the same time that, by the way, the government is paying people more money not to work than to work, has forced many mom-and-pop renters to sell their rental property or to actually have to move into their own rental property as they are selling other properties just to pay their bills. The moratorium is an example of why we need to stay focused on reopening America.

Setting aside for a moment that a series of Federal judges have found this moratorium to be unconstitutional, the fact is the Administration's response to renters in need has not worked and has hurt as many people as it has helped. The Federal Government has failed miserably at managing the landlord-tenant relationship.

Let's focus on getting the facts out to people. It is safe to reopen. We have done very well with vaccinating vulnerable populations. COVID deaths have decreased dramatically, but with these new variants, now is a good time for all those who have been hesitant to take a renewed look at getting vaccinated.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Mr. Scalise. I am pleased to welcome today's witnesses.

I would first like to introduce Ms. Katrina Chism, who is appearing with us virtually. After Ms. Chism lost her job, her landlord, a company owned by a large private equity firm, twice tried to force her and her son out of their home. These attempted evictions came even though Ms. Chism filed for protection under the CDC eviction moratorium and secured offers of rental assistance funds. Ms. Chism's difficult experience highlights the abusive tactics that some corporate landlords used against tenants and makes clear the disruptive impact that aggressive evictions have on working families. I would also like to welcome Mr. Jim Baker of the Private Equity Stakeholder Project, who has done significant research and monitored eviction trends by large corporate landlords over the course of the pandemic. Next, I welcome Ms. Diane Yentel of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, whose organization has studied the impact of the pandemic on housing stability and struggling Americans. I would also like to welcome Rene Solis, who is appearing virtually, of BakerRipley to discuss best practices for providing local rental assistance. Ms. Solis has helped to administer the city of Houston and Harris County's successful rental assistance program. Finally, I want to welcome Mr. Joel Griffith, a research fellow for the Institute for Economic Freedom and Opportunity at the Heritage Foundation. Thank you all for taking the time to testify about this critical issue. I look forward to hearing from all of you on how we can continue to prevent a pandemic eviction crisis.

Will the witnesses please rise and raise your right hands?

Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[A chorus of ayes.]

Mr. CLYBURN. You may be seated. Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Without objection, your written statements will be made part of the record.

We will hear first from Mr. Baker. Mr. Baker, you are recognized for five minutes for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF JIM BAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PRIVATE EQUITY STAKEHOLDER PROJECT

Mr. BAKER. Chairman Clyburn, Ranking Member Scalise, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jim Baker with the Private Equity Stakeholder Project. We are a nonprofit focused on tracking the impacts of private equity firms and similar Wall Street firms on ordinary people, including residents of apartments, rental homes, and mobile homes.

Since early in the pandemic, we have tracked eviction filings by private equity firms and other large landlords across dozens of counties and several states, representing about 10 percent of the U.S. population, focusing on corporate landlords with 1,000 units of housing or more. In the counties we have tracked, corporate landlords have filed to evict at least 75,000 residents since the Trump Administration put a moratorium in place to halt evictions last September, and we know this just scratches the surface. These filings have hit renters of color especially hard. For example, corporate landlords avowedly filed 16,000 eviction actions in majority-black DeKalb and Clayton Counties in Georgia since September. In 2021, Progress Residential and Front Yard Residential owned by private equity firms, Pretium Partners and Ares Management, have filed to evict residents in DeKalb and Clayton counties at more than seven times the rate they have residents in majority white counties in Florida. In many of the counties we tracked, corporate landlords have consistently accounted for the majority of all filings.

In May, corporate landlords accounted for 74 percent of eviction filings in DeKalb County, Georgia, 62 percent in Maricopa County, Arizona, 53 percent of filings in Hillsborough County, Florida and Harris County, Texas. Since last September, some of the world's largest asset managers that manage trillions of dollars have filed to evict residents, including Morgan Stanley/Eaton Vance, Greystar Real Estate Partners, Ares Management, the Carlyle Group, Starwood Capital, PGIM, Nuveen/TIAA-CREF, and CBRE.

While many renters have faced dramatic hardships during the pandemic, many corporate landlords have done extremely well and are growing and buying more housing. Private equity firm Pretium Partners, which owns rental home companies Progress Residential and Front Yard Residential, together they have filed at least 1,700 eviction actions since last September. Pretium is run by Don Mullen, a former Goldman Sachs banker, who made a fortune during the 2008 global financial crisis betting against the mortgage market, getting rich as millions of homeowners lost their homes to foreclosure. In April 2021, as this company was filing evictions, Mr. Mullen purchased a \$25 million mansion in Miami Beach.

Publicly traded investment trust, Invitation Homes, the largest donor of rental homes in the U.S., has filed more than 880 eviction actions since last September, and has sought to challenge the CDC hardship declarations of several residents. Its stock price has increased by more than 44 percent over the last year. Canadian-owned apartment company, Ventron Management, has filed to evict almost 30 percent of its residents since April 2020. Some large landlords continue to file, in advance, eviction cases against residents rather than working with them to access the almost \$50 billion in rental assistance that Congress made available to prevent evictions and enable residents to pay back rent and stay in their homes.

Front Yard Residential, for example, filed to evict 133 residents in the first eight days of January, just days after Congress made rental assistance available. Reuters reported how Invitation Homes refused to accept \$4,000 in county program funds from Marvia Robertson, a bus driver in Florida, who the company evicted in March.

Invitation Homes told Robinson that it was not participating in the program due to landlord restrictions. Some large landlords have taken a different path. We noticed just nine eviction filings by publicly traded single-family rental landlord, American Homes, for rent between September 2020 and March 2021. Private equity firm, Oaktree Capital, substantially reduced its eviction filings in Nevada and Arizona earlier this year.

Eviction is not a foregone conclusion, but a decision that landlords, even large corporate landlords, make. We applaud the subcommittee for initiating investigations into multiple corporate landlords that have each filed hundreds of eviction actions, especially since these actions may displace thousands of residents and will remain on residents' records for years and could impact their access to housing into the future. An organization violating the CDC eviction moratorium may be subject to a fine of up to \$200,000 per violation. The subcommittee should recommend action by the U.S. Department of Justice to seek penalties from landlords that have violated the eviction moratorium. In addition, the subcommittee should specifically assess whether any landlords violated residents' civil rights by disproportionately filing to evict black renters or other renters of color.

As we enter a critical new phase of the crisis facing renters, it is important that we remain vigilant about corporate landlords' evictions of residents and the growing role of these companies in U.S. housing. Thank you.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you, Mr. Baker. We will now hear from Ms. Chism. Ms. Chism, you are now recognized for your five-minute statement.

**STATEMENT OF KATRINA CHISM, AFFECTED RENTER,
GEORGIA**

Ms. CHISM. Good morning, Chairman Clyburn and members of the subcommittee. My name is Katrina Chism, and I am speaking today about my experiences renting from a company called HavenBrook Homes when I applied for rental assistance to avoid eviction.

I moved into the home in DeKalb County, Georgia in the spring of 2018. It was eventually purchased by HavenBrook Homes. The rent crept up each year I lived there, making my budget tighter and tighter. The home was not in the greatest condition, but it was livable. HavenBrook Homes was always slow to fix things in the home, but quick to collect the rent. Although I occasionally had to pay rent late when money was tight, I never had an eviction filing until the pandemic. In August 2020, I lost my customer service job due to the pandemic. I was hired by the Urban League of Greater Atlanta in September, but the month in between jobs led me to fall behind in my rent. I filled out and gave my landlord a copy of the CDC declaration, knowing it was set to expire in December 2020. I found a local nonprofit agency willing to assist me with my rent, but my landlord was uncooperative and I lost the rental assistance. In January, HavenBrook Homes served me with my first eviction. Ironically, once that happened and the CDC order was extended, I was finally able to speak with my leasing agent. I got into

a payment arrangement, caught up on the rent, and HavenBrook dismissed the eviction against me.

In March 2021, my job with the Urban League was eliminated. I applied for unemployment benefits right away, and I was actively job hunting. I was eventually approved for unemployment, but I didn't get the money for 2-and-a-half months. While waiting, I fell behind on all of my bills. I even got a gas disconnection notice at one point. On March the 4th, when I was just one month behind on my rent, HavenBrook Homes filed a second eviction against me. I applied for rental assistance on February 12, 2021, the very day the Tenant-Landlord Assistance Coalition in DeKalb County began accepting applications. I was approved, and Atlanta Legal Aid began trying to negotiate a resolution with my landlord using the rental assistance. Under DeKalb County's rental assistance guidelines, I could get half of my balance covered. Around mid-April, I learned my landlord had rejected the proposal outright. HavenBrook didn't even come back with a counteroffer to tell me how I could save my home. At the same time, my landlord gave me a notice that they would not be renewing my lease when it expired in mid-May. I didn't understand why. Before the pandemic, I had always paid or caught up on my rent. My family and I had lived there several years with no issue.

HavenBrook then made me an offer. If I moved out immediately, even before my lease was up and before the CDC order expired, they would forgive my rent balance. I felt pressured because my leasing agent told me I could be immediately evicted after my lease expired, that the CDC order would not apply to me. If I had to leave anyway, I wanted to walk away without the debt, but I couldn't find a place to move my family that quickly. HavenBrook made it clear they wanted me out instead of accepting the rental assistance.

The fear of homelessness became a reality for me. I was very concerned that my son and I would have nowhere to go but to a shelter. I was concerned about our health, and I was concerned about my son's school. I have always made sure my children feel safe and secure in their home. I never had to face this type of stress before, and I had no idea what I was going to be able to do with little to no income and no home. In May, I moved to another county further outside of Atlanta where I felt forced into a much, much more expensive lease. I used all I had to pay for moving expenses. I was eventually approved through DeKalb County for two months of rental assistance at my new home, but that assistance has not come yet.

I felt voiceless up against such a large corporation like HavenBrook. I felt expendable, and they showed me that I was. I was not given any consideration as a long-term tenant with no evictions on my record. I felt as if I had broken the law somehow while we were in the middle of a pandemic. There was no concern for my life or my son's life as they focused on their profit margin. I now have to get a second job and my 16-year-old son has to start working to contribute to the vast increase in my monthly expenses. My son had to switch schools and now has to start over. Hopefully he can thrive, but I worry about the long-term impact this will have on him.

Thank you for hearing my story, and I am happy to answer any questions that you have.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Ms. Chism. We will now hear from Ms. Yentel. Ms. Yentel, you are now recognized for five minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DIANE YENTEL, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION (NLIHC)**

Ms. YENTEL. Thank you. Chairman Clyburn, Ranking Member Scalise, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Federal eviction moratorium, an essential lifeline that has kept millions of renters housed during the pandemic, is set to expire this weekend. When it does, the six-and-a-half million renter households who remain behind on rent will be at heightened risk of losing their homes. An estimated 80 percent of those families live in communities where the Delta variant of COVID-19 is surging, and emergency rental assistance available to pay rent arrears and keep tenants stably housed has yet to reach the vast majority of renters in need. Having millions of families lose their homes would be tragic and consequential at any time. It would be especially so as COVID surges and with abundant resources to pay the rent that may not reach them in time. This urgent situation demands immediate action by policymakers and stakeholders at all levels.

When Congress and the Administration extended the CDC eviction moratorium and Congress provided \$46-and-a-half billion for emergency rental assistance, state and local governments got to work to create new programs and distribute aid to renters and landlords, a significant and time-consuming undertaking during a global pandemic. But for a variety of reasons laid out in my written testimony, the funds are getting out much too slowly in states and cities, especially as the expiration of the moratorium nears. Nearly half of all states and more than 100 cities have spent less than five percent of their total ERA allocations. Fifteen states had spent less than two percent of their funds through June. Some states and cities are successfully ramping up their programs and getting the money quickly to those who need it, but many more need to dramatically improve and expedite their efforts. At this time, even if they do, they can't reach all the six-and-a-half million families in need before the moratorium expires this week.

States and cities, renters, families need more time. The Biden Administration or Congress must extend a Federal eviction moratorium. If Federal court cases make a broad extension impossible, they should consider and implement all possible alternatives. The newly surging Delta variant, low vaccination rates in communities with high eviction filings, and the slow rate of distributing ERA make the necessity of an extension abundantly clear. In turn, states and cities must improve and expedite getting assistance to the tenants who need it to stay housed. Our research shows that successful ERA programs are visible, accessible, and preventive of evictions and housing instability.

All program administrators should do robust and equitable outreach to marginalized and impacted communities, have simple ap-

plications, use self-attestation for eligibility wherever possible, provide direct-to-tenant assistance when landlords refuse to participate, and be willing to learn and improve as programs and needs evolve. And the Biden Administration should continue as they have been to aggressively urge, empower, and push states and cities to do more and better. For the longer term, Congress must repair the gaping holes in our social safety net that brought us again and again to the brink of an eviction tsunami during a global health emergency.

Congress should advance Chairwoman Waters' critical legislation in an infrastructure spending bill. This legislation would, one, expand rental assistance to make it universally available to all eligible households in need. Having rental assistance fully funded and available would help the country to avoid these eviction crises in the future. And two, to increase the supply of homes for the lowest income people by preserving public housing and expanding the National Housing Trust Fund. In addition, Congress should create a permanent emergency rental assistance program to keep families stabilized during a crisis and lessen ongoing evictions and their long-term harm with robust renter actions, like right to counsel, expunging eviction records, protections against source-of-income discrimination, and more. With six-and-a-half families at risk of losing their homes during an ongoing pandemic, policymakers and stakeholders at all levels must do more to improve programs, extend and increase renter protections, and invest in long-term solutions to make homes affordable to the lowest-income people.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Ms. Yentel. We will now hear from Mr. Solis. You are now recognized for five minutes.

**STATEMENT OF RENE SOLIS, CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER,
BAKERRIPLEY, HOUSTON, TEXAS**

Mr. SOLIS. Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to speak with you and with the committee today. My name is Rene Solis, and I am the chief program officer at BakerRipley. BakerRipley is one of the largest community development nonprofits in the state of Texas. We are proud to serve the city of Houston, Harris County, and other regions across the great state of Texas. We serve over half a million of our neighbors every year, and this morning I would like to share with you our experience as an administrator of the COVID-19 rental assistance funds. But first, let me start by thanking you and all of our congressional leaders for providing the much-needed rental assistance funding to our fellow Americans.

Now I would like to share our initial leadership story. In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had been spreading throughout our region, impacting our economy and impacting the livelihood of our neighbors. Amid that uncertainty, leaders from across our region sprang into action to identify ways to ease the profound financial burdens placed on our communities. It was soon thereafter that city of Houston mayor, Sylvester Turner, and Harris County judge, Lina Hidalgo, established the Housing Stability Task Force, led and overseen by Texas state representative, Armando Walle, and retired Shell Oil president and CEO, Marvin Odum. The task force included regional leaders with a broad base of experience and ex-

expertise, housing advocates, community-based organizations, landlords, the Houston Apartment Association, legal aid agencies, and representatives from both the city and the county.

It was through this collective effort that it was decided that the best way forward to effectively serve tenants and landlords, we needed to create one program for the entire region with a single point of enrollment for both landlords and tenants. That decision, in my opinion, was the catalyst that paved the way for the ultimate success of the Houston-Harris County Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

Next, let me say a little bit about capacity. BakerRipley assumed the initial responsibility of administering the program for both the city of Houston and Harris County, but by the end of 2020, despite our best efforts, it was clear that the economic impact was continuing and that the need for rental assistance was ongoing and growing. We knew that any additional resources would need to be distributed quickly and effectively. And that is when Catholic Charities of Houston-Galveston joined our efforts and became the second administrator of the program, and helped expand our region's capacity to process eligibilities, and applications, and payments. Together, we wasted no time in applying the lessons learned from 2020 in quickly initiating our 2021 program.

Next, I would like to mention our outreach efforts because it, too, have been critical to our program. We have added nine local organizations which serve as navigating agencies. These organizations focus on outreach, provide technical assistance to tenants and landlords, help identify and address gaps in the system, and offer other resources to tenants. This has, again, expanded our regional capacity and allowed BakerRipley and Catholic Charities to focus on tenant and landlord eligibility and payments. Also, in an effort to add capacity and to focus some resources on eviction diversion, our partners at the Alliance of Houston helped to establish an Eviction Diversion Program. This program provides partner advocates and rental assistance to tenants who are already in eviction proceedings.

Also worth mentioning is stakeholder buy-in. In our initial strategies, we recognized that both the landlords and the tenants play a valuable role in the distribution of rental assistance funds. The program has to work for both parties if it is going to meet its objective of keeping families in their homes. To accomplish this, we had separate outreach communication and enrollment plans for the landlords and for the tenants, and it all came together because of a great system development partner. We partnered with Connective, a non-profit system solutions vendor who we had worked with over the years through disaster recovery efforts for Harvey and other natural disasters that hit our region. Connective helped us build a user-friendly intake platform, application processes, and technology-enabled coordinated tools, and provided streamlined data analysis. And on that note, I would like to point out that data is critical. We have a real-time dashboard that shows where funds are being distributed throughout the region. We knew that for the region to truly prosper, it was imperative for everyone to have equitable access to essential resources and opportunities.

In conclusion, we continue to see impressive results. For 2021, we have distributed over \$137 million and helped more than 30,000 households stay in their homes, and we are not done yet. We are now processing applications for an additional \$53 million of ERA II funding.

Thank you for inviting us to share our experience with you this morning, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer any questions that you or committee members may have.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much, Mr. Solis. We will now hear from Mr. Griffith. Mr. Griffith, you are now recognized for five minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JOEL GRIFFITH, RESEARCH FELLOW, THE
HERITAGE FOUNDATION ROE INSTITUTE**

Mr. GRIFFITH. Thank you, Chairman Clyburn, Ranking Member Scalise, and other members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Joel Griffith. I am a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own.

Last year, for the first time in our Nation's history, state and local governments intentionally suppressed and criminalized entire swaths of economic activity. In the midst of the turmoil, the CDC banned property owners from commencing the eviction process in the courts until the end of 2020, and the CDC subsequently renewed and extended that ban three times. Regardless of the intended beneficiaries, eviction moratoria allowed many who are not even impacted financially to live rent free. And their complete eradication of evictions coincided with just a slight rise in delinquent rent payments of about 2.2 percentage points in July 2020 versus July 2019. The moratorium clearly allowed many who were neither impacted by COVID-19 nor experiencing financial hardship to live rent free. Now, to the extent that the eviction moratoria did operate as an economic aid measure to those who are jobless, thanks to the COVID shutdowns, this enabled these local politicians to shirk responsibility for shuttering businesses and ruining livelihoods, placing the cost squarely on the shoulders of property owners.

These eviction moratoria have produced harmful ripple effects. Landlords are going to need to increase rents to mitigate the heightened risk of future moratoria and to recoup losses from the past. Prospective renters may find themselves subject to increased security deposits and tighter credit checks. Ultimately, fewer affordable housing units may be constructed. Quality of life for other tenants is impacted as well as landlords are unable to evict people for disorderly conduct, illegal drug use, and criminal activity. Moratoria also invoke serious constitutional and legal concerns. They may violate the Takings Clause of the Fifth and the Fourteen Amendments, along with the Contracts Clause. But without a doubt, the CDC's ban on eviction proceedings was unlawful because it exceeded its congressional mandate.

The executive order last year and in this year was predicated on the Public Health Services Act, which authorizes regulations that are necessary to prevent the introduction, transmission, or spread of communicable diseases. Examples of congressionally authorized

actions for the CDC are listed in the Public Health Services Act, and they come nowhere close to including eviction moratoria. As legal scholars at the Heritage Foundation have explained, “A basic canon of statutory construction is that when a broad, vague term follows a list of specifics, that term can only refer to the sorts of things listed before it. Nationwide eviction bands are nothing like the localized limited congressionally approved actions of inspecting, fumigating, or disinfecting specific buildings.”

Even the language of the CDC order shows that the ban was meant as economic relief, not as a tool to protect the public from the spread of disease. And truly, if preventing the spread of communicable disease were the goal, the CDC would have hardly focused on only the small fraction of total annual relocations that stem from evictions. Evictions account for less than one-tenth the number of total annual relocations. In short, both the CDC action itself, the eviction moratorium, and the intent to counter the economic impact of COVID violated the express will of Congress. But most importantly, even if Congress had authorized the CDC to enact this moratorium, such authorization itself would have been unconstitutional. Congress can only delegate to the executive branch the powers granted to it by the Constitution. The Commerce Clause certainly does not authorize this. Also, anything the Congress authorizes must be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the Congress’ will. Banning access to state courts, forbidding a state court from exercising constitutional jurisdiction would be an abuse of Federal power, not a proper use. In fact, it violates the First Amendment of the Constitution.

In conclusion, the CDC moratorium exceeded powers delegated to it by Congress. It created economic policy through executive fiat. It infringed upon the fundamental constitutional right to petition state courts. It eroded private property rights, diminished the enforceability of contracts, and infringed upon the sovereignty of states by interfering with the jurisdiction of their courts. We must be vigilant against attempts to use this COVID crisis as an excuse to further erode the rule of law, federalism, and fundamental constitutional rights. Defending one’s property rights is neither aggressive nor unfair. What is aggressive and unfair, and unconstitutional and lawful is the CDC criminalizing access to the courts and forcing property owners to relinquish their rights. Thank you.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you, Mr. Griffith. Now, each member will have five minutes for questions. The chair recognizes himself for five minutes.

The first question goes to Mr. Solis. I am particularly interested in the outreach part of your testimony, and I suspect from your projection as to where you plan to go in the future. Based upon your past experiences, will you share with us some of the hard-to-reach people that you have experienced, and maybe what you are planning to do going forward? Hopefully it would be helpful to the rest of us as to what we need to plan for.

Mr. SOLIS. Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So first, I would like to mention that our outreach efforts have been very critical to the success of our program. One of the things we did was we recognized, one, that the need is great, but two, that there is sometimes some distrust, or accessibility issues, or other barriers

for vulnerable populations. So, in an effort to address those concerns, we have added to the Houston-Harris County Emergency Rental Assistance Program nine local organizations who partner with us as service navigators. These organizations do focus on outreach. They provide technical assistance to tenants and landlords. They help identify and address gaps in the system, and they offer other resources to tenants. For us, this has been very helpful because it has expanded our regional capacity and allowed BakerRipley and Catholic Charities to stay focused on tenant and landlord eligibility and payments.

Our approach from the initial steps, and which continue to date, has been a holistic approach. We seek to help our neighbors get the help they need through our relationships and with the navigating agencies. To date, over 4,000 additional tenants have signed up for our Rental Assistance Program, who received assistance from these navigating agencies. These are vulnerable populations with barriers to access to these resources. These navigating agencies were chosen for their diversity and ability to connect with these diverse communities, and their ability to remove such barriers such as technology, language, trust, or any other accessibility to these programs. So, we are very grateful and thankful to these agencies, and we look forward to their continued work in the program.

Another piece of our strategy around outreach and ensuring that funding and resources are available to everyone is part of our work that we did early on in 2020 as we developed our equity dashboards. We partnered with a long-time partner here, Moksha Data, who helped us develop these dashboards that looked at the census tract level, and we built a formula that takes into consideration the Social Vulnerability Index of each census tract that looks at how many rental units are within each census tract and looks at the paid data that we generate for payments to landlords. In that sense, what we did, and we have a slide that we could share with you at some point, what we did was create a map of our region of where resources were going and where there were gaps in resources going out to certain communities. As we identified those gaps, then the navigating agencies would go out, talk to landlords, talk to tenants, build a trust with the community, and get individuals signed up for the program.

Mr. CLYBURN. Now, I only have about 45 seconds left. Can you tell me how did you target those areas? Did you have information as to where the people were or where the housing was needed?

Mr. SOLIS. Yes. Again, it was that equity dashboard that we built early on. We looked at the Social Vulnerability Index for each census tract, which looks at different vulnerability elements, such as poverty, education, housing, transportation, et cetera, and we mapped that all out for our region. And then we crossed over where there were rental units within each census tract, and that was the data we used to it effectively reach these vulnerable populations. Again, what we ended up looking at was where was the funding going and is it going specifically to those vulnerable neighborhoods.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you.

Mr. SOLIS. And if it is not, then address the reasons why it is not.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you. My time has expired. I will now recognize the ranking member for five minutes.

Mr. SCALISE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I have some questions I am going to ask. Obviously when we were having the opening statements, I was talking about the number of people we are seeing coming across the border illegally. But also, we have had a hearing on this where Dr. Fauci, among others, testified that the CDC is violating their own guidance at the border in terms of trying to stop the spread. I wanted to see if we could run, there here is a video, Mr. Chairman, that we have given to your staff, if we could run that video right now.

[Video shown.]

Mr. SCALISE. So, Mr. Chairman, as we can see, Dr. Fauci testified back a few months that what we are seeing at the border by the Biden Administration is violating their own CDC guidance about how to properly protect people from spreading COVID. Since that hearing, Mr. Chairman, at least another 400,000 people have come across our border illegally, and those are just the ones that were apprehended. Many of them, as our Border Patrol agents tell us, are COVID positive now with the Lambda variant. Do we need to keep saying this before we finally have a hearing to confront this? But the Lambda variant could potentially be more dangerous than the Delta variant. It is widespread in Peru. It is coming across our border right now through South and Central America into the United States. At what point we are going to have a hearing to confront how to stop this? At what point is President Biden going to get control of the southern border so we don't see the Lambda variant take over in our country like we are seeing the Delta variant?

But to the issue at hand, I do want to ask Mr. Griffith, regarding the vaccines, do you think they are safe and effective?

Mr. GRIFFITH. From what we know, these vaccines are incredibly safe, very effective, and it is in large part why much of the country has been able to return to normal.

Mr. SCALISE. And it was clearly Operation Warp Speed efforts that brought these to the market so quickly. Are these vaccines available to everybody who wants to take them?

Mr. GRIFFITH. Thankfully in this country, these vaccines are widely available. Every person who wants a vaccine can get one. They are available at no cost, and across the entirety of the country you can get a vaccine with almost no wait, same day. Show up, you can get the vaccine.

Mr. SCALISE. And so, you know, you are seeing some employers that are encouraging their employees to get vaccinated as we try to push to get people back to work. How many job openings are there in the country?

Mr. GRIFFITH. We have over 9 million job openings right now. In fact, we have never had this many job openings. There are more job openings now than there were prior to the pandemic. There are more job openings now than there are the total number of people unemployed in this country.

Mr. SCALISE. And see, that is something that we have been talking about. Do you think it is good policy to be borrowing money

from our children to pay people not to work at a time where there maybe be more job openings than we have ever seen before?

Mr. GRIFFITH. No, we are mortgaging our children's future, our grandchildren's future. We are beginning to feel the impacts of that right now over this past year. As you noted, our cost of living is actually increasing at a greater clip than our actual income levels, and we know for a fact that borrowing money from the future to pay people not to work has actually resulted in many people choosing to not go back to work. We know this anecdotally from talking to people, but the numbers are showing up in the data as well because you can compare and contrast those states that have cutoff Federal unemployment bonuses with those states that haven't, and the data are clear. The states that have cutoff those bonuses have recovered at a much greater clip.

Mr. SCALISE. And then we are seeing our economy pick up or seeing people able to get back to their lives, not having problems with rent because they are working again. You are hearing talk around this place by people that just want to spend and spend and spend as if it is money just growing off trees. Do you think a multi-trillion-dollar spending package on top of the trillions that have already been spent would do anything to add to the inflation we are already seeing?

Mr. GRIFFITH. It could quite possibly. In fact, don't just take my word for it. Lawrence Summers, who was one of President Obama's top advisors, has actually warned about this possibility as well. The fact is every new dollar that is appropriated by Congress is a dollar that we actually aren't taking in from taxes. We are borrowing this, or we are having our central banks print the money, buy the debt, and inject it into the economy, and there will be negative consequences for that in terms of the standard of living for the typical family being lower than it would otherwise have been because their cost of living will increase as a result of possible inflationary pressures.

Mr. SCALISE. Well, I appreciate your testimony, and, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. CLYBURN. I thank the ranking member for yielding back. The chair now yields to Ms. Waters for five minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I really do appreciate your calling this hearing. It is very important. However, I must spend a few minutes dealing with Mr. Scalise and his attack on the Administration. Mr. Scalise talked about what was happening with COVID-19, and I am looking at this article in his local newspaper that says, "After months of waiting and as cases spiked, GOP lawmaker gets first COVID shot. 'The vaccine works.'" And it was on Sunday that Mr. Scalise received his first Pfizer vaccination at a clinic in Jefferson Parish. I don't think he has even received his second Pfizer vaccination. And so, this business about him now becoming, you know, concerned and having gotten religion about vaccinations is very interesting. I appreciate that he has come around—

Mr. SCALISE. Would the gentlelady yield?

Ms. WATERS. No, not right now. I appreciate that he has come around because while cases of the virus and hospitalizations are on the rise, vaccinations have become a dividing line in the U.S. with

many conservative-leaning Americans choosing not to get vaccinated, despite the scientific consensus that the COVID vaccine is extremely safe and extremely effective. Again, this is coming from an article that was written about Mr. Scalise and his hesitancy with getting vaccinated, and when asked time and time again, he would just say, "soon." Some political scientists have attributed the polarization to former President Donald Trump's public downplaying of the virus, even as he was sickened and hospitalized with COVID-19 and has since gotten the vaccine himself.

And so, I just wanted to insert, you know, that information into the record because of the attack that Mr. Scalise made on this Administration.

Ms. WATERS. And now let me get to rental assistance. This is very important to me because it was the No. 1 priority for me in dealing with the American Relief Plan that we were able to increase the total amount of rental assistance to about \$47 billion, and this is so very important. And I want you to know that I am pleased that Ms. Yentel is here today. Because of her, president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, that we have been able to get all of this money. She not only organized and worked with the other housing advocacy groups, she was responsible for the kind of insistence on making sure that we had an adequate amount to deal with rental assistance.

And she worked with the Administration. The Biden Administration adopted many of NLIHCA's recommendations, including extending the eviction moratorium and releasing an updated FAQ 50 and Fact Sheet 51, June 24, to accelerate and broaden the distribution of ERA. The White House encouraged state courts to adopt anti-eviction diversion practices, activated a whole-of-government effort to raise awareness of ERA, and Treasury issued new guidance to accelerate and broaden state and local distribution of funds. Treasury's revised FAQ strongly encourages grantees to partner with courts to actively prevent evictions and develop eviction diversion programs, increase access to ERA for people experiencing homelessness by establishing a commitment letter process, directs grantees to remove cultural and linguistic barriers to accessing aid, encourages grantee coordination to reduce burdens and delays, and streamlines payments for utility providers and land boards.

I, too, worry about these evictions. The moratorium is going to be over at the end of this month, and I think it is absolutely necessary for us to pay attention, to do everything that we can to make sure that we just simply aren't having evictions that are going to put people out on the street and increase homelessness. That is why I am so appreciative for this hearing today, Mr. Chairman.

And so, with that, I want you to know that I was always worried about distribution. This is huge. This is not easy to do. And now we have put the money in the hands of state governments, and I want the governors and the elected officials in the states to come up with programs that will do what we intend them to do. Some have been more successful than others, like we are hearing about in Harris County. Others are slower, and so we have got to get them all up to speed because this is absolutely necessary to deal with protection for our families.

And I am also concerned about small landlords, not the big boys—they can take care of themselves—but the small landlords who depend on this for their mortgage payments, who depend on rental assistance for their retirement income. I am concerned about them, too, so I wish that we could challenge the courts. I know what the court decisions have been, and I know what they are saying to us, but we need to go ahead and go back to the courts and ask them to please allow this Administration to extend the moratorium on evictions. So, I want you to know, Mr. Chairman, that it just happened that I met with Secretary Yellen this morning, and she and her staff are working very hard to do everything that they can to assist the governors and the states in getting this money out.

I thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CLYBURN. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Chairman, I believe under the rules, I have an opportunity to respond since—

Mr. CLYBURN. The chair recognizes the ranking member.

Mr. SCALISE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you go back well over months ago, I have been promoting the vaccine, and I obviously had a lot of conversations with my doctors for a number of reasons. I needed to make sure that it was the right time for me, but I was promoting the vaccine all along the way and calling people out who did promote vaccine hesitancy, which, by the way, if you start with President Biden himself.

[Video shown.]

Mr. SCALISE. You want to talk about vaccine hesitancy? That is vaccine hesitancy.

Ms. WATERS. No, it is not.

Mr. SCALISE. President Biden needs to come out and admit he was wrong when he was trying to discourage people from taking the vaccine late last year. It is safe. It is effective. And anybody who was trying to give concern about the vaccine or the FDA owes an apology because that is just not accurate. So anyway, I am going to continue to promote the vaccine and the safety and effectiveness of it, and I would encourage others to take it. I yield back.

Ms. WATERS. [Speaking foreign language.]

Mr. CLYBURN. I want to thank you for yielding back. However, Mr. Scalise, I think you are aware that those comments were made before the vaccine was approved.

Mr. SCALISE. But it was made during the process of the FDA going through Operation Warp Speed—

Mr. CLYBURN. Well, during the process is one thing—

Mr. SCALISE [continuing]. which produced three vaccines.

Mr. CLYBURN. During the process is one thing, but they were made before the vaccines.

Mr. SCALISE. But people listened to that and said why take it if Joe Biden said it at the time that he was not President. If he said the process was rushed or the FDA shouldn't be trusted, do you really think there weren't people listening to that?

Mr. CLYBURN. OK. I just want the record to be clear that the vaccines were not approved when those statements were made. And with that, the chair now recognizes Mr. Jordan.

Mr. JORDAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those statements were made in a political context in the heat of a campaign. We all know what that was about. It was all about politics, which is so much at what drives this place from the majority's perspective. Mr. Griffith. Mr. Griffith. Last week at a half-filled auditorium, President Biden said, if you increase spending, it will bring inflation down. Do you agree with that statement?

Mr. GRIFFITH. I would love to know under what world that would actually work. We know that right now, with all the money that the Federal Government is spending, all the new funds that are appropriated that comes from borrowing money, and, oftentimes, that borrowed money actually comes thanks to the central banks printing more money to purchase those bonds, which then are injected into the economy.

Mr. JORDAN. So, you disagree with that.

Mr. GRIFFITH. I disagree wholeheartedly.

Mr. JORDAN. Yes, me, too. I not only disagree. I think it is stupid. Anyone who's got a brain understands that that isn't going to work. I mean, it is like they have spent money like crazy. Are you surprised that we now have inflation, that the price of every single good and service is, almost every single thing, I can't think of one that is not up, that almost every single good and service is up? Are you surprised about that?

Mr. GRIFFITH. No, I am not surprised. We have the economy reopening, but on top of that, we have trillions of dollars more of Federal dollars that have been injected into the economy. And besides that, we see housing prices aren't even factored into that inflation rate. We have that housing bubble that is really becoming a burden now on middle-class families.

Mr. JORDAN. So, the Democrats' economic plan seems to be a four-part plan. Step one, continue to lock down the economy. We have Democrat governors, Democrat mayors going back to lockdown measures. So, the Democrats' economic plan, lock down the economy. Spend like crazy, No. 2. Pay people not to work, right? You talked about the unemployment situation in our economy today. So, continue to lock down the economy, spend like crazy, pay people not to work, and step four they are getting ready to do, which is for the people who are working, we are going to raise your taxes. Now, again, that may be the four most stupid economic policies you can imagine, but that seems to be their economic plan. Do you agree?

Mr. GRIFFITH. No, that is absolutely the plan, and we know that the longer-term objective here is to centralize more power here in Washington, DC. and to fundamentally transform the economy. They are not even hiding it. But then the infrastructure package that you are considering now, that Congress is considering now, we know that 95 percent of that is not even going to infrastructure, but it would actually try to revolutionize our energy industry, which by "revolutionize," I mean, causing a typical family \$8,000 more per year to live by artificially driving up the cost of everything in their life that uses energy. And that is in the infrastructure plan.

Mr. JORDAN. Now, the program we are talking about today, this eviction issue and everything, isn't it true that people who make

up to \$99,000 a year can be eligible for this program and not pay their rent? Well, isn't that true?

Mr. GRIFFITH. Yes, states have much leeway to put in those parameters, but in many instances, yes, people at that income level can qualify.

Mr. JORDAN. Ninety-nine thousand dollars. Every employer I talked to in our district can't find people to work, and we have a program in our district. Ninety-nine thousand. Jeepers, you are probably in the top 3 or 4 percent of income earners. If you make almost \$100 grand a year, you are at the income scale in Champaign County, Ohio, Shelby County, Ohio. But they can self-attest, right? All they have to do attest to a statement. Now, one really checks it and say, you know, I make \$98,999.99, and I am eligible to not pay my rent.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Well, not only can you self-attest to that, you can also self-attest to whether or not you were impacted by COVID.

Mr. JORDAN. Yes. Yes. Yes, that is the program, right? Do you think that is contributing to the fact that not a single employer out there that I have talked to can find people willing to work? You got signs everywhere, "help wanted," "please help," "we'll hire," "come in," "we will give you a bonus if you come to work." Do you think that is contributing to that situation today?

Mr. GRIFFITH. Oh yes, without a doubt. And anecdotally, we know that happens. I mean, I have been all over the South over the last few months and you see the signs. I have talked to business owners, but we see that as far as the data as well. We know that this is impacting the desire for people to actually want to go to work.

Mr. JORDAN. If you pay people not to work, you shouldn't be surprised when you can't find workers, right?

Mr. GRIFFITH. Right.

Mr. JORDAN. I mean, the folks I represent, that is just common sense. They get it, right? This is the craziest. I mean, I have never seen a more crazy economic plan than what the Democrats keep putting forward. Lock down your economy, spend like crazy, which they say doesn't cause inflation, but everyone with the brain knows it does. Then they say, oh, we are going to pay people not to work, and, oh, for the people who have been working their tail off for the last year-and-a-half or whatever, we are going to raise your taxes. Wow. Such a deal. That is the Democrats' economic plan, and yet we have a hearing on this. "We need to continue this program." "We need to continue to let people self-attest that when they make \$98,999.999 and can go without paying their rent." Holy cow. I just don't get it.

And when this committee could be, as the only select committee in the Congress on coronavirus, could actually be asking the same question that The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal want us to ask, which is why would we be funding this research in Wuhan, China? What was really the origin of this virus? We should be dealing with that issue. Even The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal say that, but, no, we are going to talk about this. I yield back.

Mr. CLYBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding back. The chair now recognizes Ms. Velázquez.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Yentel, a *New York Times* article found that New York City landlords are filing evictions 3.6 times faster in zip codes hardest hit by COVID, and roughly 68 percent of these residents are people of color. How are the pandemic eviction findings impacting communities of color and vulnerable populations? And by the way, do you have any data that shows how many of those making \$99,000 in income have not paid or have filed for evictions?

Ms. YENTEL. Thank you, Congresswoman Velázquez. If I could take a moment just to clarify that both the Congressman and the witness are wrong that rent is not due under the Federal eviction moratorium. What the Federal eviction moratorium does is prevent evictions, and, in doing so, prevent the spread of and deaths from COVID-19.

Mr. JORDAN.

[Inaudible.]

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Chairman, could the gentleman respect the witness? This is my time.

Mr. JORDAN.

[Inaudible.]

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. It is my time.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Jordan, we are not going to tolerate that.

Ms. YENTEL. The rent is still due, and low-income renters have done all they could during the pandemic to pay it. They have taken out loans. They have used credit cards. They have put off buying store-bought food or paying for internet that their children need for virtual school. They have made tradeoffs to pay the rent when they can, and when they can't, they fell behind, which is why the emergency rental assistance is so essential to pay the arrears that have accrued during the pandemic.

To your question, yes, the pandemic has certainly exacerbated preexisting inequities for people of color. Pre-pandemic, due to decades of systemic racism in multiple systems, people of color are disproportionately likely to be renters, to be extremely low income, to be behind on rent, to experience homelessness, and COVID-19 compounded these inequities. So black and Native-American people were disproportionately likely to contract and die from COVID-19, black and Latino workers were disproportionately likely to lose jobs, and people of color disproportionately fell behind on rent. So today, about 25 percent of all black renters are behind on rent compared to 10 percent of white, and of those six-and-a-half million renters behind on rent, those six-and-a-half million households behind on rent, the majority of them are people of color.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you. Mr. Baker, your organization found that the corporate landlord, Pretium Partners, has moved to evict tenants in majority black areas at a much higher rate than tenants in majority white areas. Can you explain how some corporate landlords are moving to evict tenants in a racially disparate manner?

Mr. BAKER. Thank you, Representative Velázquez. That is correct. Pretium Partners is a private equity firm. Along with Ares Management, another large private equity firm, they have been, you know, buying more homes, and earlier this year, you know, purchased a company called Front Yard Residential. They own lots of single-family rental homes. We noticed that, you know, they

were filing to evict hundreds of residents in DeKalb and Clayton Counties, two majority-black counties in Georgia, and it was, frankly, striking just the large volume, like I said, you know, 113 filings in just the first eight days of the year. And so, frankly, we were struck, and so we took a closer look at some of their filings and, you know, compared it to other counties where they owned homes, Polk and Seminole Counties in Florida, two majority-white counties in Florida, and found that they had been filing to evict renters in DeKalb and Clayton Counties, the majority-black counties in Georgia, at this point, seven times higher rates, so much, much higher rates.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Can you tell us what share of evictions in the areas that you have tracked had been filed by corporate landlords, and if this is a trend nationwide?

Mr. BAKER. As we looked at a number of the areas that we have tracked, so counties like Maricopa County which is Phoenix, Harris County which is Houston, DeKalb County which is Atlanta, and some of the suburbs, right, Hillsborough County which is Tampa, we found that the majority of the eviction filings were by these large corporate landlords, landlords with 1,000 units or more. So not mom-and-pop landlords, but really, it was the larger corporate landlords that have been driving the evictions. We have looked at this few different times over the last several months. It was true back in December. It was true in September just after CDC eviction moratorium was put in place in the first place.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. My time has expired.

Mr. CLYBURN. The gentlelady's time has expired. Mr. Green, you are recognized for five minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. Today's hearing comes a few days before the CDC's moratorium will allegedly end, and I say "allegedly" because the CDC has already extended the ban multiple times. Let me be clear. The CDC's moratorium is one of the most blatant power grabs that we have seen in the course of the pandemic. The CDC has assumed that it had the authority to do essentially whatever it wanted, no matter what the law said and no matter how tenuous the connection to public health. The CDC moratorium is an offense to two fundamental cornerstones of our republic: federalism and states' rights. Congress never passed a law allowing the CDC to ban evictions, but there is more than just that. Congress could not delegate this power to the Federal Government even if it wanted to. Even a generous reading of the Commerce Clause did not give Congress the power to do this. That is our constitutional system of government. And how can we claim private property rights if the Federal Government can just come in and tell you that you cannot enforce the terms of a basic contract? This is one of the most shameless cases of bureaucracy gone rogue that I have ever seen.

And I am not sure how an eviction moratorium prevents the spread of COVID-19. The eviction moratorium is almost identical to what government has done to healthcare. Let me explain. As more renters are subsidized with government dollars, landlords, especially mom-and-pop, small business landlords who have maybe one or two or three properties, they have to cost shift to other peo-

ple. They cost shift to other renters, and that drives up the price of overall rent. And you add to that the inflation caused by the increased dollars in the economy and the current Administration's economic policies, rapidly increasing rates, rapidly increasing inflation, you basically get a horrible spiral that is occurring right now in our economy. And a tertiary effect is also there and real. These small rental companies can't generate the revenue to cover the losses. So, what do they do? They get out of business. All the small companies get out of business. All you are left with are large, huge rental companies because they can absorb the losses. Let there be no doubt: this is destroying everyday Americans who put their savings into owning a rental property. It is driving the price of rent up. It is driving up inflation, and it is harming low-income Americans just like healthcare, just like government intrusion into healthcare.

And here is another example of something that is contributing to at least an increase in prices in my state, in the state of Tennessee. People are leaving California, Illinois, and New York because of Democrat liberal policies just like this. You know what they are doing? They are buying houses off the market in Tennessee, sight unseen off the internet, driving the price of properties in my state through the roof. Why? Because of failed liberal policies in places like California, New York, and Illinois. Great examples of just this kind of stupidity. It is another example of well-meaning politicians who wind up destroying the very thing they want to save.

We see it in healthcare. I ran a healthcare company. I am a physician. What do they do? They intrude on the doctor-patient relationship, and now they are intruding on the renter-tenant relationship, the landlord-tenant relationship. We are seeing it everywhere, these small companies going out of business. They put their life savings into buying two or three rental properties, get a little bit ahead, and now they can't cover their losses.

Mr. Griffith, I probably have only time for one question here. I am concerned that the eviction moratorium is detrimentally impacting small landlords, that the debt they are being saddled with could seriously impact them not just in the short term, but in the long term. Would improvements to the distribution of emergency rental assistance funds help small property owners recover from the pandemic?

Mr. GRIFFITH. It could immensely help. If you look at the difference in city by city in the distribution efforts, you have places like Chicago and L.A. that barely distributed a dollar. New York City has distributed, what, \$100,000 in aid. Meanwhile, you have Des Moines that has distributed almost 70 percent of the aid that was allocated to them. And just take a look at some of the distribution sites to see the ease-of-use. I have done that for New York City and Des Moines.

Mr. GREEN. Why do you think they are holding on to the dollars and not distributing them?

Mr. GRIFFITH. You know, a lot of them are putting the strings attached. If you look at the New York requirements, if you are New York landlord and you take the aid to make up for your losses, you have to agree that you will not evict the person for future non-payment for the next year. You have to agree that you won't increase

rent prices for the next year. You put so many strings attached to the aid that a lot of landlords, they can't make the decision to accept it because they know it will inhibit their ability to turn a profit for years to come.

Mr. CLYBURN. I assume the gentleman yields back. As I go to the next gentleman, Mr. Foster, I just want to mention for the record that the CDC eviction moratorium was placed by the previous Administration, not this one. I just want that to be clear. With that, I yield to Mr. Foster.

Mr. FOSTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to our witnesses. I am very concerned about the public health consequences of fighting this pandemic if we experience a surge in evictions. You know, the CDC, when it established the moratorium, you know, published a very detailed justification that I think I would urge everyone to reread because, you know, at the time there was a lot we did not know about the contagious aspects of this virus, but we know a lot more now. And we are ultimately going to get this answered because we are seeing a big range in eviction policies in different states and jurisdictions, and what we are going to see is a spike in coronavirus in the affected populations. I think when I look at where people who become homeless end up, they end up in places where it is really hard to maintain social distancing, and so it wasn't for no reason that the CDC under President Trump established this.

And this is starting to be looked at by academics. There are studies by professors at Duke University and UCLA that have suggested that preventing evictions really also reduces transmission of the coronavirus.

Excuse me. Is there microphone trouble here? Am I audible? OK. Thank you.

So, the CDC says that people experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of contracting and transmitting the virus. So, Ms. Yentel, can you explain how an increase in evictions might contribute to increasing transmission of the coronavirus?

Ms. YENTEL. Yes, thank you for the opportunity. Research has proven that increased evictions lead to increased spread of and deaths from COVID-19. There is a recently peer-reviewed published paper by epidemiologists, and sociologists, and others that found that state and local eviction moratoriums did result in 400,000 additional cases of COVID-19 and over 10,000 preventable deaths. That is because, as you say, when very low-or extremely low-income people lose their homes, they have very few options available to them, so they most often double or triple up into overcrowded housing, or they end up in encampments or congregate shelters. Both options make it very difficult, if not impossible, to socially distance, and lead to spread of COVID-19 and spread among a population, especially in congregate shelters that have a whole host of underlying health conditions that make them especially vulnerable to severe illness or death if they contract COVID-19.

Mr. FOSTER. Thank you. Any of the other witnesses have any reason to believe this might not be the case, that it is more complex than this? Yes?

Mr. GRIFFITH. Thank you. Well, we have to ask whether or not the CDC actually has the power to suspend the evictions, and it is established that they don't have that power. And then we have to ask does Congress have the power to give them the power, and they don't. But third, when it comes to the eviction process itself, this is a state matter. This is the first time that we have criminalized access to state courts by property owners.

Mr. FOSTER. No, I was interested in the scientific question of whether more people will die if, for whatever reason, the eviction moratoria are not preserved, and it seems to me the answer is pretty clearly yes. Mr. Baker, I understand that your organization has tracked eviction filings by large landlords over the course of the pandemic in select counties in six states, which appears to be a significant undertaking. It is the kind of data we will need to get to the bottom of this and other questions. Other organizations also track evictions, but generally they also only collect data from certain state and cities. So, Mr. Baker, what are the barriers to collecting better data on eviction filings so we can really understand questions like this?

Mr. BAKER. Thank you, Representative Foster. It is wildly different from county to county, from state to state. In some states, you know, by locality, just the availability of data, the, you know, kind of access, the availability of data on what actually happens with eviction filings, et cetera. So, you know, we have seen wildly different availability of data. And, you know, like I said, I mean, I think that we have tracked and noticed 75,000 eviction actions by corporate landlords, by these large landlords, but, you know, that is just a small subset of jurisdictions. There are clearly many, many more that, you know, that we are not able to track, that we haven't seen, and so it really just scratches the surface. Really, these 75,000 filings are the tip of the iceberg, and, you know, make us extremely concerned as we get closer to the expiration of the CDC moratorium, you know, what we will see, right?

When we have looked at some of these companies—Pretium Partners, Ms. Chism's landlord, or HavenBrook, et cetera, you know, we see landlords that, you know, in many cases have, you know, filed, like I said, hundreds or thousands of eviction cases, but there are clearly more that we haven't seen. And there are many where, you know, frankly, you know, as we get to the end of the moratorium, we could see significant harm to large numbers of renters.

Mr. FOSTER. Yes. Thank you, and I believe my time has expired, so I will yield back.

Mr. CLYBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding back. The chair now recognizes Mrs. Miller-Meeks for five minutes.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record a written submission from the National Association of Realtors and also a letter and supporting documents from Pretium.

Mr. CLYBURN. Without objection.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you. So, I think this has been very interesting testimony that we have heard today. So, we have too much money chasing too few goods, which has led to inflation, which even the Fed Secretary, Jerome Powell in his testimony here, acknowledged that inflation was in excess of what we have

seen in several decades, although the Administration is hoping that it is transitory. And we also know that inflation is an insidious tax and a regressive tax that disproportionately affects people of color, low-income individuals, working families, and seniors on a fixed income. So, Mr. Baker, do you think inflation would have any bearing on the ability of someone to rent or pay their rent, whether there is a pandemic or not?

Mr. BAKER. I am not an economist, and so I cannot speak to—

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. OK. Thank you very much. In March, I introduced H.R.—

Mr. BAKER. Wait. What I would say is, you know, clearly, you know, a landlord substantially increasing somebody's rent, you know, as Ms. Chism highlighted, clearly, like, has a significant impact, and so that is exactly what we have seen. You know, Pretium, I used as an example. We have seen other companies. Invitation Homes is publicly traded. They reported in their SEC filings there was a—

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. My question was whether inflation—

Mr. BAKER [continuing]. when there was a switchover to a new renter—

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. My question was whether or not inflation would have a bearing on paying rental income. I have mom-and-pop individuals, ordinary people, low to middle income who have rented their houses in my neighborhood, which in Southeast Iowa has the highest rate of unemployment and the lowest wages in the state, who have had challenges and problems. And because we are small communities, they know that they are getting stimulus checks. They know that their renter is getting unemployment, yet not paying rent. So, my question, I get that you are not an economist and you can't answer.

In March, I introduced H.R. 1897, the REACT Act, which would require the Department of Homeland Security to test all migrants coming across our borders who are released into the U.S. That was voted down. Given the increase in rates of COVID-19 with Delta and Lambda variants, it seems fitting that this committee should focus on ensuring testing for more than 1.1 million migrants encountered along the southwest border so far, yet we don't require this, these individuals that come across our border or are put on planes or buses, taken to communities, and they are placed in facilities which are large facilities, convention centers. And are any of the panelists aware if COVID-19 testing is being required at the border, and if multi-tenant housing owners should require testing before renting and putting their other occupants at risk? Thank you. I would say we should still be testing at the border.

Mr. Baker, in your testimony, you stated that you had identified over 75,000 evictions during the CDC eviction moratorium. As we have heard already today, we know the CDC's eviction moratorium is not blanket in nature and does not bar all residential evictions, and the moratorium only applies to monetary defaults. Nonetheless, it is estimated there are 43 million units of rental housing in the U.S. Do you agree with that figure?

Mr. BAKER. Yes. I mean, I—

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. Eviction notices being filed are approximately 0.17 percent of all rental housing units. Is that correct?

Mr. BAKER. That is incorrect. As I mentioned in my statement, we are tracking evictions across a subset, right? And as I mentioned in response to Mr. Foster's question, the data is extremely fragmented, right? And so, there is different data across different cities, across different states, and so we have sought to attract as many places as possible. But it is absolutely incorrect to do a simple division as you just did.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. OK.

Mr. BAKER. It is just not the right way to interpret the figure.

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. But would you say that the data on how many eviction notices resulting in actual displacements is small?

Mr. BAKER. As I said, we need better data in terms of—

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS. OK. So essentially, what I am hearing as I am here is we are spending our time in a committee discussing an issue that, while it is very important, is only affecting a very small percentage of people and for which policies have been put in place that maybe more constitutionally based. And essentially, we don't have the data to tell us how many displacements. Meanwhile, in a committee that is addressing the Select Coronavirus Task Force, we still don't know the origins of COVID-19, and we have representatives here suggesting that the origins of COVID-19 investigation would be brought up in another committee. And it is important for public health, national security, and also for how our media treats information and where it comes from, that we know the origins of COVID-19, which we still don't have, and a CDC which is now going to ask that people who are doubly vaccinated wear masks.

So, I think there are important questions that we need to address and policies that should be put in place constitutionally to assist people. Thank you. I yield back my time.

Mr. CLYBURN. The gentlelady's time has expired. The chair now recognizes Mr. Krishnamoorthi for five minutes.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask a question of Ms. Yentel first. Ms. Yentel, can you tell me how many children have been in homes that have basically benefited from this particular eviction moratorium?

Ms. YENTEL. I don't have the specific number of children, but I can say that the CDC eviction moratorium, generally speaking, has kept tens of millions of renters, who otherwise would have lost their homes, stably housed. And there was research from the Eviction Lab that showed that there were at least 1.5 million fewer evictions under the Federal eviction moratorium than otherwise would have occurred.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. And that was the eviction moratorium that Donald Trump put in place, correct?

Ms. YENTEL. President Donald Trump implemented the CDC eviction moratorium. President Biden has extended it several times. And in between, Congress, on a bipartisan basis, extended the Federal eviction moratorium, given clear congressional authority for it.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Mr. Griffith, I want to turn your attention to an article that you wrote with a gentleman named Stephen Moore. It is entitled, "The Myth of the Idle Rich." And in that particular article, which you penned in June 2015, you said the fol-

lowing: “Yes, the average poor family doesn’t work nearly as much as the rich families do, and that is a key reason why these households are poor.” You don’t dispute that you wrote that in this article, “The Myth of the Idle Rich,” correct?

Mr. GRIFFITH. I did co-author that article.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Now, Ms. Yentel, is it your experience that the reason why households are, on average, poor is because they just don’t work as hard as rich families do?

Ms. YENTEL. No, certainly not. When we look at extremely low-income renters, we find that the vast majority of them are seniors. They are people with disabilities and they are working, and they are often having to work multiple jobs in order to make ends meet and still have difficulty paying the rent. That is because the housing wage, the amount that somebody needs to earn an hour just to be able to afford to rent a modest one-bedroom apartment, is \$20.40 nationally. It is much higher in some communities. Clearly, this is almost three times the amount that a low-wage worker earning the Federal minimum wage earns, and it is also \$2.00 an hour more than what the average renter earns. So, renters are working, and they are working hard, but housing remains out of reach for them.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. For that type of family that some people think just aren’t working hard enough and remain poor, how were they affected by the pandemic and the economic recession that it induced?

Ms. YENTEL. Well, what I would say is that many, many low-wage workers throughout the pandemic were not able to stay at home. As higher-wage workers were able to work virtually, low-wage workers were keeping stores open. They were the ones who were selling and sharing PPE and other essential services and goods that people needed during the pandemic. And as a result, many of them contracted COVID-19 and likely died from it as well. So, people continued to work during the pandemic, and many low-income renters were among those low-wage workers who were first to lose their jobs or lose hours at work, lose wages when the shutdown occurred, and, as a result, fell behind on rent.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Let me jump in for a second. I think that one question that is out there among folks with regard to the eviction moratorium is that, let me just read you another statement from an article that Mr. Griffith wrote in an article entitled, “Why COVID-19 Eviction Moratoriums are Unnecessary, Unfair, and Economically Harmful,” from July 2020. And in there, he says, “The plunge in evictions coinciding with only a slight rise in delinquent rent payments strongly suggests the current moratorium has allowed many, who remain spared from COVID-19 financial stress, to live rent free.” Now, Mr. Griffith, you did write that in July 2020, correct?

Mr. GRIFFITH. And, Congressman, I want to say thank you for your earlier question regarding the idle rich—

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Let me just ask this question with regard to your quotation, which is this. Ms. Yentel, let’s clarify something. People are not allowed to live rent free during the moratorium, correct?

Ms. YENTEL. Correct.

Mr. GRIFFITH. That is actually incorrect. People are——

Ms. YENTEL. Rent is still due when people are under the eviction moratorium, and, in fact, the declaratory statement that tenants need to sign in order to get the benefit of the Federal eviction moratorium makes clear that they need to still do all that they can to pay the rent, and many renters have.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Thank you. I yield back, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Mr. CLYBURN. Now, before I go any further, in the absence of the ranking member, I will yield for a closing statement to Mr. Jordan.

Mr. JORDAN. I thank the chairman for yielding. When this virus initially came on the scene, Dr. Fauci initially told the American people you don't need to wear a mask, then he later said, no, we need to wear a mask. Then he said, no, you need to wear two masks. Then after that he said, no, back to one mask. Then, of course, we went to no mask, and now he is talking about we need to wear a mask again. When it comes to the question of the origin of the virus, Dr. Fauci has had just as many positions. He initially said the United States taxpayer money did not fund the Wuhan Institute of Virology. He later changed that said, no, no, no, we did find it, but it was through a subgrant that he subsequently said, no, no, we funded it, but we did no gain-of-function research, and then just last Sunday, he said, well, we funded it. There was no gain-of-function research, but it was a sound scientific decision. And then he said this: it would have been negligent to not fund the lab in China. I mean, talk about being all over the board.

I will tell you what is negligent. Negligent is Dr. Fauci's ever-changing statements to the American people regarding the subject matter that this committee should be looking into. Let me look at this email that we got through the FOIA that others got that we were able to view through the FOIA request. This goes clear back to January 31, 2020, a 10:32 p.m. email that Dr. Fauci received from Dr. Christian Anderson. Dr. Christian Anderson is one of the individuals who gets our tax dollars, the folks I represent, their tax dollars. Dr. Anderson sent this email to Dr. Fauci, and he said this: "The unusual features of the virus make up a really small part of the genome, so one has to look really closely at all the sequences to see that some of the features look engineered," and that last clause is the key. "Some of the features of this virus look engineered." He went on to say, "Further, I should mention after discussions earlier today with Eddie, Bob, and Mike"—these are other virologists, other doctors around the world who receive our tax dollars via grants from Dr. Fauci—"Eddie, Bob, and Mike, and myself all find the genome inconsistent with expectations from evolutionary theory." That is a fancy way of saying it is not consistent with evolutionary theory, so the virus looks engineered, not consistent with evolutionary theory.

Less than 24 hours after this email, the very next day, less than 24 hours later, Dr. Fauci organizes a conference call with 11 virologists from around the world. He is the only person from government on that call, and that is where they talk about getting their story straight and what they are going to tell the American people, even though one of the top scientists in the world says this virus is engineered, this virus is not consistent with evolutionary theory.

Now, we don't know what happened on that phone call because every single email regarding that phone call, every single one has been redacted. I hope the majority will actually join us in calling for these emails to be unredacted and given to this committee. Every single one is redacted.

We do know what happened three days later. Dr. Anderson changed his story, and he went from this virus looks engineered, this virus is not consistent with evolutionary theory, to you are crazy if you think it came from the lab. I find that interesting because one of the guys who testified four weeks ago when Dr. Fauci wouldn't was Dr. Giroir, who has testified in front of this committee a couple times, former assistant secretary for health. Here is what Dr. Giroir said: "I believe it is just too much of a coincidence that a worldwide pandemic caused by a novel bat coronavirus that cannot be found in nature, started just a few miles away from a secretive laboratory doing potentially dangerous research on coronaviruses." Well, shazam, that is pretty common sense. Dr. Fauci, I think, was on notice of this very fact clear back on January 31, 2020. We all now see as common sense what Dr. Fauci continues to downplay, continues to say is not true.

And here is what is interesting. This Thursday, we just found out, this Thursday, the majority has asked Dr. Fauci to come back in front of this committee for a third time. Third time. But guess what? It is not going to be public. It is going to be private. Private briefing. After all these concerns have been raised, you got what Dr. Giroir said, you got what everyone one says, anyone with common sense now knows the most likely origin of this virus was that lab in Wuhan, China, the Democrats bringing Dr. Fauci back, but he won't be in public. A private briefing. Why? Why don't you do it publicly? Dr. Fauci has testified 18 times in front of Congress. He has been on every news show you can imagine more than once. You can't go a day without seeing him on TV. But now the Select Committee on Coronavirus won't bring him in for a public hearing to address these issues. Nope, it is going to be private.

As I said earlier, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal* think we should get to the bottom of this. Pretty much everyone thinks we should get to the bottom of this, except the Democrats on the Select Committee on Coronavirus. So, I hope at least the majority will join the minority and say at least give us the unredacted emails from this all-important meeting on February 1, 2020, where these guys, I believe, got their story straight and decided to mislead the American public for over a year about the origins of this virus. I hope the majority will at least join us for that. I yield back.

Mr. CLYBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding back. I would like to say that, in view of his comments concerning the briefing, the private briefing he is talking about, that has to do with the members of this committee becoming better informed as to the Delta variant. It is not any kind of a testimony. That is a briefing.

Mr. JORDAN. I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman, but why not make it public? The American would like to be informed as well.

Mr. CLYBURN. Well, we can make a decision after we have heard in private whether or not we should make it public, but as of this moment, it will be a private briefing.

With that, I want to thank the witnesses for their testimony today. The coronavirus pandemic and the housing insecurity that it has caused has only served to illuminate that safe and secure housing is essential to building prosperous communities, and essential to a strong, sustainable, and inclusive recovery. Today's hearing has made it clear that while our Nation is still at risk of an eviction crisis, we know what we must do to prevent it. The abusive eviction practices of corporate landlords must stop. Rather than evicting struggling renters from their homes, landlords must work with tenants who are experiencing hardship to access rental assistance funds.

I am often amused when I hear people talk about how much it costs to get something done, and I very seldom, if ever, hear them talk about what will be the costs if we don't do it. Homelessness will result from these evictions. What is the cost of homelessness both to the families involved and to the communities? And we know from recent studies that if people are evicted, kicked out of their homes and end up in shelters or on the street, they are much more susceptible to the ravages that come from COVID-19 than they would be if they were staying in their homes.

It seems to me that all of us have some responsibility for getting beyond this pandemic for the people who are in need of homes, as well as those people who enormously benefit financially from these homes because they aren't giving up anything. We just appropriated \$46 billion that goes to them. It doesn't go to the people in the homes. It goes to these landlords who own them, \$46 billion. So, I think as state and local authorities continue to improve their rental assistance programs, they must adopt best practices, like directly aiding tenants when their landlords refuse to cooperate with assistance programs, and adopt other effective strategies from successful programs, such as the Houston-Harris County program we have heard about today, the kind of outreach, the kind of mapping that is necessary to identify where the real needs are. As my great friend and our former colleague, Elijah Cummings, would say, this country is better than that.

Thanks to the efforts of the Biden Administration, access to rental assistance is expanding widely. I think I gave the numbers: in May, 290,000, as opposed to 160,000 in April. In one month, nearly doubled. In one month. So, we are making progress on this. The Federal Government must continue to do all they can to ensure that all Americans have access to these vital programs, and I would hope that this committee will continue to do the work that is necessary to make sure, at the threat of being too repetitive, to make sure that all of this is done efficiently, effectively, and equitably.

Without objection, all members will have five legislative days within which to submit additional written questions for the witnesses to the chair, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response.

Mr. CLYBURN. With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:36, the select subcommittee was adjourned.]

