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Chairman Phil Mendelson

A BILL

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IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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To extend, on an emergency basis, the Mayor’s authority to declare a public emergency; to amend the Coronavirus Support Amendment Act of 2021 to remove the public health emergency as the trigger for provisions of the act; to provide for a moratorium on utility disconnections for qualified customers and repeal accelerated review of grant budget modifications by the Council; to require certain improvements to the Stronger Together by Assisting You program; to amend DC Code 16-1501 to allow housing providers to file eviction cases in Superior Court where the tenant continuing presence is a threat to health and safety, where the tenant has willingly and wantonly caused significant damage to the property, and where the housing provider owns five or fewer rental units, the tenant is not eligible for rental assistance, and the housing provider is in severe financial distress; to amend DC Code 16-1501 to allow housing providers to file eviction cases in Superior Court for non-payment of rent on October 12, 2021 if 60 days have elapsed since the initiation or submission of an emergency rental assistance program application or the tenant is not is eligible, provided that an application is not pending or under appeal; to amend DC 16-1501 to allow housing providers to file other eviction cases in Superior Court beginning January 1, 2022; to amend DC Code 16-1502 to require summons be served 30 days in advance of an initial court hearing and a readable time stamp if the summons was served by posting; and to amend Section 501 of the Rental Housing Act of 1985 to provide for specific notice requirements for eviction cases involving non-payment of rent and cases with evictions authorized prior to March 11, 2020; and to repeal outdated provisions of other laws.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the “Public Emergency Extension and Eviction and Utility Moratorium Phasing Emergency Amendment Act of 2021”.

Sec. 2. Section 7(c-1) of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective March 5, 1981 (D.C. Law 3-149; D.C. Official Code § 7-2306(c-1)), is amended to read as follows:

“(c-1) Notwithstanding subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the Council authorizes the Mayor to extend the 15-day March 11, 2020, emergency executive order issued in response to the novel 2019 coronavirus (SARS CoV-2) until October 8, 2021. After the extension authorized by this subsection, the Mayor may extend the emergency order for additional 15-day periods pursuant to subsection (b) or (c) of this section.”.

Sec. 3. The Coronavirus Support Temporary Amendment Act of 2021, effective June 24, 2021 (D.C. Law 24-9; 68 DCR 4824) is amended as follows:

(a) Section 101 is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase “during a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01),”.

(2) Subsection (g) is amended by striking the phrase “during a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01),”.

(b) Section 102 is amended as follows:

(1) Amendatory subparagraph (A-i) contained in subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase “During a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01), and in” and inserting the phrase “In” in its place.

(2) Amendatory subsection (b) contained in subsection (c) is amended by strking the phrase “During a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7- 2304.01), and subject” and inserting the phrase “Subject” in its place.

(3) Amendatory subsection (b) contained in subsection (d) is amended by striking the phrase “During a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7- 2304.01), the” and inserting the phrase “The” in its place.

(c) Amendatory section 3a contained in Section 104(b) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase “During the COVID-19 public health emergency, an” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(2) Subsection (b) is amended as follows:

(A) Paragraph (1) is amended by striking the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021”.

(B) Strike paragraph (2).

(3) Strike subsection (i).

(d) Amendatory section 3a(e) contained in Section 105(a)(2) is amended to read as follows:

“(e) COVID-19 emergency” means the period of time from March 11, 2020 through November 5, 2021.”

(e) Amendatory section 2316(a)(1) contained in Section 201(b) is amended by striking the phrase “Upon the Mayor’s declaration of a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01), and in” and inserting the phrase “through November 5, 2021, in” in its place.

(f) Amendatory subsection (a-1) contained in section 202 is amended by striking the phrase “During a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency (“PHE”) pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “through November 5, 2021” in its place.

(g) Section 203(a) is amended by striking the phrase “of the COVID-19 emergency” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(h) Section 205 is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase “which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01) (“public health emergency”)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(2) Subsection (b) is amended by striking the phrase “during a public health emergency,”.

(i) Amendatory section 4a contained in section 302(a) is amended by striking the phrase “for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(j) Section 303(b) is amended as follows:

(1) Amendatory subsection (l) is amended as follows:

(A) Paragraph (2) is amended by striking the phrase “During a public health emergency and for 60 days after its conclusion” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(B) Paragraph (4) is amended by striking the phrase “duration of the public health emergency and for 60 days thereafter” and inserting the phrase “period of time from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(2) Amendatory subsection (m) is amended by striking the phrase “public health emergency and for 60 days after its conclusion” and inserting the phrase “period of time from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(k) Section 307 is amended by adding new subsections (h) through (p) to read as follows:

“(h) Subsections (c), (d), and (e) of this section shall expire on October 12, 2021.

“(i) Subsections (b) and (f) of this section shall expire the later of October 12, 2021 or 60 days after the Mayor begins allowing home internet assistance through STAY DC or a similar District-funded program.

“(j) After October 12, 2021, and except as otherwise prohibited by subsections (b) and (f) of this section, a company shall not disconnect, suspend, or degrade service, for non-payment of a bill, any fees for service or equipment, or any other charges, if:

“(1) The company has failed to engage the customer as required under subsection (k) of this section;

“(2) The customer owes less than $600;

“(3) The customer has entered into a payment plan with the company and either is meeting the terms of the payment plan or is less than 2 months’ behind the terms of the payment plan;

“(4) Prior to October 12, 2021, the customer has requested to enter into a payment plan with the company and fewer than 45 days have elapsed following the customer’s initial request; or

“(5)(A) The Mayor has certified or the customer has provided documentary evidence that the customer qualifies for utility disconnection relief.

“(B) The Mayor shall certify that an individual is qualified for utility disconnection relief for 90 days after October 12, 2021, if the individual:

“(i) Has an application pending approval or under appeal, for any form of financial assistance from the Stronger Together by Assisting You (“STAY DC”) Program or other utility assistance program;

“(ii) Within the prior 6 months, received or was approved for a benefit under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (“LIHEAP”), Utility Discount Program (“UDP”), DC Water Emergency Relief Program (“CAP”), or STAY DC Program;

“(iii) Is receiving a benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (“TANF”) program; or

“(iv) Is 21 years of age or older and receiving a benefit under Medicaid or the D.C. Healthcare Alliance.

“(C)(i) By September 13, 2021, the Mayor shall provide notice to each individual certified as qualified for utility disconnection relief pursuant to subparagraph (B) of this paragraph.

“(ii) By September 27, 2021, and every 4 weeks thereafter until January 1, 2022, the Mayor shall provide companies with a list of each individual certified as qualified for utility disconnection relief, including the individual’s home address. Such list shall be property of the District and shall only be used to determine that an individual on the list is qualified for relief from utility disconnection and communicate that to affected households and companies as needed.

“(D) By August 9, 2021, the Mayor shall, pursuant to Title I of the District of Columbia Administrative Procedure Act, approved October 21, 1968 (82 Stat. 1204; D.C. Official Code § 2-501 *et seq*.), promulgate emergency rules to implement this paragraph, including guidance on the District’s and the companies’ responsibilities under this paragraph.

“(k)(1) A company shall provide notice, as described in paragraph (4) of this subsection to a customer regarding their account at least 60 days in advance of disconnecting, suspending, or degrading service, inclusive of disconnection procedures in section 311 of Title 15 of the DC Municipal Regulations (15 DCMR § 311).

“(2)(A) On or before October 12, 2021, a company shall provide notice as described in paragraph (4) of this subsection to customers with a bill past due. Notice under this subparagraph shall be mailed to the customer in hard copy and the phrase “PAST DUE” shall be clearly printed on the bill or envelope.

“(B) Notice under this paragraph shall take the form of a flyer included in monthly customer bills or prominent language on the bill and be included in both hard copy and electronic form bills.

“(3) A past due or disconnection notice sent to a customer by a company shall include notice as described in paragraph (4) of this subsection.

“(4) Notice under this paragraph shall be issued in at least English and Spanish. The notice shall include information on:

“(A) The availability of payment assistance programs;

“(B) Information on eligibility for payment assistance programs and the process to apply to each payment assistance program;

“(C) The right of customers to remain eligible for relief from disconnection, suspension or degradation of service, provided that they are eligible for relief under subsection (j)(5) of this section; and

“(D) A customer’s right to contact Office of People’s Counsel (“OPC”) for assistance with negotiating a payment plan on the customer’s behalf.

“(5) The Public Service Commission and DC Water Board may issue regulations regarding customer engagement criteria and customer notice requirements consistent with this subsection.

“(l)(1) For a period of 90 days beginning on October 12, 2021, a company shall restore service to a customer when the customer makes a payment to the company of at least $10, provided that the customer enters into a payment plan pursuant to section 308 of the Coronavirus Support Emergency Amendment Act of 2021, effective March 17, 2021 (D.C. Act 24-30; 68 DCR 3101) or section 308 of the Coronavirus Support Temporary Amendment Act of 2021, effective June 24, 2021 (D.C. Law 24-9; 68 DCR 4824); or makes a showing that the utility was disconnected improperly pursuant to this act. Amounts paid by a customer pursuant to this paragraph shall be applied in full to reduce the amounts owed by the customer to the company.

“(2)(A) When a customer whose service has been disconnected, suspended, or degraded for nonpayment is certified by the Mayor or documented by the customer to be eligible for utility disconnection relief under subsection (j)(5) of this section, a company shall reconnect the customer without charge.

“(B) A company shall reconnect a customer under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph within 24 hours of receiving notice that the customer is qualified for utility disconnection relief under subsection (j)(5) of this section.

“(m)(1) Beginning on November 1, 2021 and ending on February 1, 2022, each utility company that is regulated by the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia shall report monthly to the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia and to the Office of People’s Counsel the number of customers, by zip code, that have entered into payment plans, that have had service suspended or disconnected for non-payment, or that are in arrears.

“(2) Beginning on November 1, 2021 and ending on February 1, 2022, DC Water shall report monthly to the DC Water Board of Directors, established pursuant to section 204 of the Water and Sewer Authority Establishment and Department of Public Works Reorganization Act of 1996, effective April 18, 1996 (D.C. Law 11-111; D.C. Official Code § 34–2202.04), and to the Office of the People’s Counsel the number of customers, by zip code and customer class, that have entered payment plans, that have had service suspended or disconnected for non-payment, or that are in arrears.

“(n) A telecommunications service provider, as that term is defined by the Telecommunications Competition Act of 1996, effective September 9, 1996 (D.C. Law 11-154; D.C. Official Code § 34-2002.01 et. seq.), shall not disconnect, suspend, or degrade basic telecommunications service to a customer that is participating in the federal Lifeline program for non-payment of a bill, any fees for service or equipment, or other charges, or for noncompliance with a deferred payment agreement.

“(o) Nothing in this act shall be read to supersede the existing moratorium on disconnections under section 106a of the Retail Electric Competition and Consumer Protection Act of 1999, effective March 9, 2016 (D.C. Law 21-82; D.C. Official Code § 34-1506.1).

“(p) For the purposes of this section, the term:

“(1) “Payment assistance programs” shall mean LIHEAP, UDP, CAP, or STAY DC.

“(2) “Company” or “companies” shall mean an electric company, gas company, DC Water, or incumbent local exchange carrier.”.

(l) Section 308 is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (c) is amended as follows:

(A) The existing text is redesignated as paragraph (1).

(B) A new paragraph (2) is added to read as follows:

“(2)(A)(i) Upon request by a customer of an electric company, gas company, incumbent local exchange carrier, or DC Water to the Office of the People’s Counsel (“OPC”), OPC shall be authorized to negotiate a payment plan on behalf of a customer.

“(ii) Within 48 hours of receiving a request under this subparagraph, OPC shall provide notice to the utility provider of the customer’s request.

“(B) A disconnection notice sent to a customer shall include notice of the right of a customer to request that OPC negotiate a payment plan on the customer’s behalf, including information on how the customer may make such a request.

“(C) When a company and customer have been unable to agree on terms of a payment plan within 24 hours of the customer’s request to enter into a payment plan, the company shall provide notice to the customer that the customer may contact OPC to negotiate a payment plan on the customer’s behalf.”.

(2) Subsection (i)(6) is amended by striking the phrase “for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place

(m) Amendatory paragraph (1A) contained in section 309 is amended by striking the phrase “time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(n) Amendatory section 5a(a) contained in section 310 in amended by striking the phrase “For the duration of a public health emergency declared by the Mayor pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01) (‘public health emergency”), and to address the circumstances giving rise to that emergency” and inserting the phrase “From March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place

(o) Amendatory paragraph (10) contained in Section 311(c) is amended to read as follows:

“(10) A commercial property that houses a business that closed between March 11, 2020 and November 5, 2021.”

(p) Section 312 is amended by striking the phrase “, or within 45 days after the end of, a period time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place

(q) Section 401(a) is amended by striking the phrase “during a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01) (“Public Emergency Act”), and for 60 days thereafter” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(r) Strike section 403.

(s) Section 405 is amended as follows:

(1) Strike paragraph (3).

(2) Amendatory subsection (c) contained in paragraph (7) is amended by striking the phrase “during a period for which a public health emergency has been declared pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01) (“Public Emergency Act”)” and inserting the phrase “prior to December 31, 2021” in its place.

(t) Section 406 is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase “during a period for which a public health emergency has been declared pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01), and for 30 days thereafter” and inserting the phrase “prior to December 31, 2021” in its place.

(2) Subsection (b) is amended by striking the phrase “during a period for which a public health emergency has been declared pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-1875 2304.01), and for 30 days thereafter” and inserting the phrase “prior to December 31, 2021” in its place.

(u) Section 408 is amended by striking the phrase “of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01), and for 60 days thereafter” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(v) Section 501 is amended by striking the phrase “time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)”. and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(2) Amendatory section 5b contained in section 507(c) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase “Upon the Mayor’s declaration of a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a, and for a period not exceeding 90 days after the end of the public health emergency, the Mayor may, notwithstanding the Grant Administration Act of 2013, effective December 24, 2013 (D.C. Law 20-61; D.C. Official Code § 1-328.11 et seq.), and in the Mayor’s sole discretion,” and inserting the phrase “From March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021, the Mayor may” in its place.

(x) Section 508(b) is amended by striking the phrase “60 days after the end of a public health emergency declared by the Mayor pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01),” and inserting the phrase “November 5, 2021” in its place.

(y) Section 509 is repealed.

(z) Section 512 is repealed.

(aa) The lead in language in Amendatory Section 316a contained in Section 702 is amended by striking the phrase “for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency (“PHE”) pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(bb) Section 807 is amended as follows:

(1) Amendatory paragraph (b) contained in subsection (2) is amended by striking the phrase “for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(2) Amendatory paragraph (d) contained in subsection (c) is amended by striking the phrase “for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(cc) Section 809 is amended as follows:

(1) Amendatory paragraph (4) contained in paragraph (a)(2) is amended by striking the phrase “for which a public health emergency has been declared pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting “of time from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(2) Amendatory paragraph (6) contained in subsection (b) is amended by striking the phrase “for which a public health emergency has been declared pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 through November 5, 2021” in its place.

(3) Subsection (c) is amended by striking the phrase “for which a public health emergency has been declared pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01),” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(dd) Section 814 is repealed.

(ee) Section 902 is repealed.

(ff) Section 905 is amended as follows:

(1) Amendatory subsection (q) contained in subsection (c) is amended by striking the phrase “for which a public health emergency has been declared by the Mayor pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective October 17, 2002 (D.C. Law 14-194; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01)” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in its place.

(2) Subsection (d) is amended as follows:

(A) A new paragraph (1A) is added to read as follows

“(1A) Strike paragraph (1A).”.

(B) Paragraph (2) is amended to read as follows:

“(2) A new paragraph (1B) is added to read as follows:

“(1B) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021, an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner may call a meeting and remotely participate in that meeting and vote on matters before the Commission without being physically present through a teleconference or through digital means identified by the Commission for this purpose. Members physically or remotely present shall be counted for determination of a quorum.”.

Sec. 3. Other conforming changes.

(a) Chapter 48 of Title 16 of the District of Columbia Official Code is amended by striking the phrase “for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to § 7-2304.01,” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in each place it appears.

(b) Chapter 1 of Title 18 of the District of Columbia Official Code is amended by striking the phrase “for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to § 7-2304.01,” in each place it appears.

(c) Title 21 of the District of Columbia Official Code is amended by striking the phrase “during a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to § 7-2304.01,” and inserting the phrase “from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021” in each place it appears.

(d) The Natural Death Act of 1981, effective February 25, 1982 (D.C. Law 4-69; D.C. Official Code § 7-621 et seq.), is amended as follows:

(a) Section 2 (D.C. Official Code § 7–621) is amended as follows:

(1) A new paragraph (2B) is added to read as follows:

“(2B) “Electronic presence” means when one or more witnesses are in a different physical location than the declarant but can observe and communicate with the declarant and one another by using technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless, optical, electromagnetic, or similar capabilities to the same extent as if the witnesses and declarant were physically present with one another.”.

(2) A new paragraph (5A) is added to read as follows:

“(5A) “Sign” means with present intent to authenticate or adopt a record to:

“(A) Execute or adopt a tangible symbol; or

“(B) Affix to or associate with the record an electronic signature.”.

(b) Section 3 (D.C. Official Code § 7–622) is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a)(4) is amended by striking the phrase “Signed in the presence” and inserting the phrase “Signed in the presence, or from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021, the electronic presence” in its place.

(2) A new subsection (d) is added to read as follows:

“(d) Any signature required by this act may be an electronic signature.”.

(c) Section 5(a)(3) (D.C. Official Code § 7–624(a)(3)) is amended by striking the phrase “in the presence of a witness” and inserting the phrase “in the presence, or from March 11, 2020 until November 5, 2021, the electronic presence of a witness” in its place.

Sec. 4. STAY DC Improvements.

(a)(1) No later than August 9, 2021, the Stronger Together by Assisting You (“STAY DC”) Program application portal shall allow housing providers to submit an application for emergency rental assistance on behalf of tenants for funding allocated to the District through Section 501 of Division N of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260).

(2) Applications submitted by housing providers under paragraph (1) shall meet all the requirements of Section 501(f)(2) of Pub. L. 116-260 and applicable guidance issued by the United States Department of Treasury.

(b) No later than August 9, 2021, the Mayor shall issue guidance outlining the circumstances in which STAY DC will cover arrearages for internet services provided to the rental unit and security deposits, consistent with U.S. Department of Treasury Guidance. This guidance shall be posted on the STAY DC website.

(c) Should additional time be necessary to implement the changes in this section, the Mayor shall notify the Council. For each specific improvement required by this section, the notice to Council shall include the reason more time is needed, and an estimate of the additional time needed.

Sec. 5. Phasing of the eviction moratorium and additional protections.

(a) Title 16 of the District of Columbia Official Code is amended as follows:

(1) Section 16-1501 is amended to read as follows:

“(a) When a person detains possession of real property without right, or after his right to possession has ceased, the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, on complaint under oath verified by the person aggrieved by the detention, or by his agent or attorney having knowledge of the facts, may issue a summons in English and Spanish to the party complained of to appear and show cause why judgment should not be given against him for the restitution of possession.

“(b) The person aggrieved shall not file a complaint seeking restitution of possession pursuant to this section for nonpayment of rent in an amount less than $600. Nothing in this subsection shall prevent the person aggrieved from filing a complaint to recover the amount owed.

“(c)(1) Prior to September 26, 2021, or during a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to § 7-2304.01, the person aggrieved shall not file a complaint seeking relief pursuant to this section, except when the complaint is consistent with this paragraphs (2), (3), (4), and (5) of this subsection.

“(2) The complaint alleges that the tenant’s continuing presence at the housing accommodation where the tenant resides presents a current and substantial threat to the health and safety of tenants, on-site agents, or employees of the owners of the housing accommodation, or household members or guests of other tenants, or residents of immediately adjacent properties, because the tenant has violated an obligation of tenancy by engaging in an unlawful possession of a firearm, threats or acts of violence, or assault;

“(3) The complaint alleges that the tenant has willfully or wantonly caused significant damage to the unit, building, premises, or property of the housing provider; or

“(4) The complaint alleges non-payment of rent, the person aggrieved owns no more than 4 rental units, the tenant is not eligible for emergency rental assistance, and the person aggrieved provides documentary evidence (i.e., not solely testimonial evidence) that he or she is in severe financial distress and such distress will be mitigated or relieved by recovering possession of the unit(s) from the tenant. The person aggrieved must provide proof of the tenant’s ineligibility for emergency rental assistance at the time of filing.

“(5) The person aggrieved shall not file for relief pursuant to this section for non-payment of rent until October 12, 2021 at the earliest. For complaints involving non-payment of rent, the person aggrieved shall provide documentation at the time of filing demonstrating that:

“(A) He or she has applied for emergency rental assistance through the STAY DC program, on behalf of the tenant, or initiated the application on behalf of the tenant, the tenant has been notified in writing of the application, and the housing provider is eligible to seek possession pursuant to § 42-3505.01(b-1)(1); and

“(B) The tenant has been served with a written notice which meets the requirements of § 42-3505.01(b-1)(2) and all other requirements under District law.

“(6) It shall be a dispositive affirmative defense requiring dismissal of a complaint for non-payment of rent if a tenant can demonstrate with substantial evidence provided through testimony that:

“(A) The landlord did not pursue rental assistance as required timely or in good faith;

“(B) The tenant did not receive notice of the rental assistance application;

“(C) The landlord did not provide a notice that meets the requirements of 42-3505.01(b-1)(2), and all other requirements under District of Columbia law;

“(D) The tenant or their authorized representative submitted an application for emergency rental assistance during the 60 days after receiving a past due rent notice, and that application is still pending, approved and awaiting payment, or under appeal;

“(E) The housing provider has not met the requirements of § 42-3505.01(b-1)(1); or

“(F) For complaints that involve rent arrears accrued since March 11, 2020, the landlord did not offer or negotiate a payment plan in good faith pursuant to § 42-3281 at any time since March 11, 2020.

“(7) For purposes of this subsection, the term:

“(A) “Act of violence” shall have the same meaning as “crime of violence” as provided in § 23-1331(4).

“(B) “Assault” shall be construed according to § 22-404.

“(C) “Significant damage” includes large holes in the walls of the unit that cannot be repaired with plaster and paint, destruction of major building systems such as electric or plumbing, destruction of appliances such as ovens, refrigerators or dish washing machines in the unit, or damage to large areas of flooring such that the housing provider will have to replace the damaged flooring.

“(D) “Threat” shall be construed according to § 22-407.

“(E) “Unlawful possession of a firearm” shall be construed according to § 22-4503.

“(8) Nothing in this section shall be construed to create an obligation on the part of any person to pursue an eviction action under this subsection.

“(9) No tenant shall be evicted from a rental unit based on a complaint filed under this subsection unless the court determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the alleged violation of an obligation of tenancy meets all of the requirements of this subsection.

“(d)(1) The person aggrieved shall not file a complaint seeking restitution of possession pursuant to this section without a valid registration or claim or exemption issued pursuant to § 42-3502.05, and a current license for rental housing issued pursuant to § 47-2828(c)(1) presented at the time of filing.

“(2) The Court may waive the requirements in this subsection if the person aggrieved can demonstrate that the housing provider for the housing accommodation was unable to obtain or renew a current rental housing license due to extenuating circumstances.

“(e) The person aggrieved shall not file a complaint pursuant seeking relief to this section based on consistent late payment of rent by a tenant occurring between the dates of March 11, 2020 and 60 days after the expiration of the public health emergency declared in response to the novel 2019 coronavirus (SARS CoV-2).

“(f) Complaints alleging material violations of an obligation of tenancy not covered in subsections (c) of this subsection shall not be filed until January 1, 2022 at the earliest.”.

(2) Section 16-1502 is amended to read as follows:

“(a) The summons provided for by section 16-1501 shall be served 30 days, exclusive of Sundays, legal holidays, and days occurring during a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to § 7-2304.01, before the day fixed for the initial hearing of the action; except, that a summons may be served during a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to § 7-2304.01, and for 60 days thereafter, if the summons relates to a complaint that is filed pursuant to the exceptions listed in § 16-1501(c)(2)-(5). If the defendant has left the District of Columbia, or cannot be found, the summons may be served by delivering a copy thereof to the tenant, or by leaving a copy with some person above the age of sixteen years residing on or in possession of the premises sought to be recovered, and if no one is in actual possession of the premises, or residing thereon, by posting a copy of the summons on the premises where it may be conveniently read. If the summons is posted on the premises, a copy of the summons shall be mailed first class U.S. mail, postage prepaid, to the premises sought to be recovered, in the name of the person known to be in possession of the premises, or if unknown, in the name of the person occupying the premises, within 3 calendar days of the date of posting.

“(b) If a summons is served by posting a copy on the premises, a photograph of the posted summons must be submitted to the court. The photograph must have a readable timestamp that indicates the date and time of when the summons was posted.”.

(c) Section 501 of the Rental Housing Act of 1985, effective July 17, 1985 (D.C. Law 6-10; D.C. Official Code § 42-3505.01), is amended as follows:

(1) Subsection (a) is amended as follows:

(A) The existing text is designated as paragraph (1).

(B) A new paragraph (2) is added to read as follows:

“(2) If a notice is served by posting a copy on the premises, a photograph of the posted notice must be submitted to the court. The photograph must have a readable timestamp that indicates the date and time of when the summons was posted.”.

(C) A new paragraph (3) is added to read as follows:

“(3) If the landlord knows the tenant speaks a primary language other than English or Spanish that is covered under section 4 of the Language Access Act of 2004, effective June 19, 2004 (D.C. Law 15-167; D.C. Official Code § 2-1933), the landlord must provide the notice in that language.

(2) Subsection (a-1)(1)(C) is amended by striking the phrase “, including evidence of the time and date of service” and inserting “with a readable timestamp that indicates the date and time of when the summons was posted.”.

(3) Subsection (b) is amended to read as follows:

“(b) A housing provider may recover possession of a rental unit where the tenant is violating an obligation of tenancy, other than nonpayment of rent, and fails to correct the violation within 30 days after receiving notice from the housing provider.”.

(4) A new subsection (b-1) is added to read as follows:

“(b-1)(1) A housing provider may recover possession of a rental unit for nonpayment of rent where the past due rent is equal to more than $600 and any of the following applies:

“(A) The tenant fails to submit an emergency rental assistance application within 60 days of receiving a notice of past due rent;

“(B) The tenant’s application for emergency rental assistance was denied, or the application was approved with a balance of equal to or greater than $600 remaining unpaid, and the tenant and housing provider have not established a rent payment plan within 14 days of the denial;

“(C) A tenant with a rent payment plan is at least $600 or two months behind on the terms of the payment plan, whichever is greater; or

“(D) The date is on or after October 12, 2021.

“(2) A notice of past due rent from the housing provider shall state the total amount of rent that is owed by the tenant and attach a ledger showing rent charges and payments for all periods of time in which the housing provider alleges the tenant’s rental payments are delinquent, that the tenant has the right to remain in the rental unit if the total balance of unpaid rent is paid in full, provide basic information about emergency rental assistance programs in the District, including the eligibility criteria for the programs and ways for the tenant to apply, indicate if an application has been submitted on behalf of the tenant or initiated by the housing provider with need for the tenant to complete the application, notify the tenant that they have 60 days to submit their portion of an application for emergency rental assistance where an application has been initiated by the housing provider, and indicate that the housing provider may file in court for possession without further notice if any of the following occur:

“(A) The tenant fails to submit their portion of an application for emergency rental assistance within 60 days of receiving the notice of past due rent;

“(B) The tenant’s application for emergency rental assistance was denied, or the application was approved with a balance of equal to or greater than $600 remaining unpaid, and the tenant and housing provider have not established a rent payment plan within 14 days of the denial; or

“(C) A tenant defaults on a rental payment plan by being the greater of $600 or two months behind the terms of the plan.

(4) Subsection (k) is amended as follows:

(A) Paragraph (1) is amended by striking the phrase “; or” and inserting a semicolon in its place.

(B) Paragraph (2) is amended by striking the period and inserting the phrase “; or” in its place.

(C) A new paragraph (3) is added to read as follows:

“(3) During a period of time for which the Mayor has declared a public health emergency pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective March 5, 1981 (D.C. Law 3-149; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01), except for evictions arising from those complaints filed pursuant to the exceptions in D.C. Official Code § 16-1501(c)(2)-(5); provided, that:

“(A) Any family facing eviction pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 16-1501(c)(2) shall be offered assistance and resources that support the coordination or continuation of youth education, social services, and other resources before the eviction is carried out; and

“(B) Any person with behavioral, emotional, or mental health issues facing eviction pursuant to § 16-1501(c)(2) shall be offered behavioral health or housing counseling services and shall be offered alternative housing arrangements before the eviction is carried out.

(5) Subsection (q) is amended to read as follows:

“(q)(1) Beginning on October 14, 2020, for the period of time during which there exists a public health emergency declared pursuant to section 5a of the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980, effective March 5, 1981 (D.C. Law 3-149; D.C. Official Code § 7-2304.01), and not earlier than September 26, 2021, no housing provider may:

“(A) Issue to a tenant a notice pursuant to this section, except notices of past due rent pursuant to subsection (b-1)(2) of this section; or

“(B) Engage in any action that is intended to force tenants to leave their housing or otherwise give up their rights under the law, including the actions described under section 502(a).

“(2) Any person who violates paragraph (1) of this subsection shall be subject to penalties under § 42-3509.01.”

(6) A new subsection (q-1) is added to read as follows:

“(q-1)(1) Subsection (q) shall not apply to notice for complaints filed pursuant to the exceptions in D.C. Official Code § 16-1501(c)(2)-(5).

“(2)(A) A notice issued to a tenant pursuant to this subsection must do the following:

“(i) State prominently and at the beginning of any such notice that the tenant does not have to vacate the rental unit until and unless a court orders the tenant to do so;

“(ii) For cases involving alleged violations of obligations of tenancy, state prominently and at the beginning of any such notice that the tenant has the right to correct or cease the alleged violation of tenancy and remain in the rental unit;

“(iii) For cases involving non-payment of rent, meet the requirements of subsection (b-1)(2) of this section, in addition to the requirements of this subsection and other applicable District laws;

“(iv) State prominently and at the beginning of any such notice that the tenant has the right to dispute the landlord’s allegations through the court process and remain in the rental unit until the court reaches a decision on the matter;

“(v) Include the phone numbers of the Office of the Tenant Advocate and the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network and state prominently and at the beginning of any such notice that both resources may provide or may refer the tenant to free legal services for tenants facing eviction; and

“(vi) If the landlord knows the tenant speaks a primary language other than English or Spanish that is covered section 4 of the Language Access Act of 2004, effective June 19, 2004 (D.C. Law 15-167; D.C. Official Code § 2-1933), be translated into that language.

(7) Section 501a(b)(1) of the Rental Housing Act of 1985, effective July 17, 1985 (D.C. Law 6-10; D.C. Official Code § 42-3505.01a), is amended as follows:

(1) Strike the phrase “not fewer than 21 days before the date of eviction”.

(2) A new paragraph (1-A) is added to read as follows:

“(1-A) For a rescheduled eviction authorized prior to March 11, 2020, a housing provider shall deliver to the tenant the notice required in paragraph 1 not fewer than 30 days prior to the new date.”

(3) A new paragraph (1-B) is added to read as follows:

“(1-B) For evictions other than those covered in paragraph (1-A), a housing provider shall deliver to the tenant the notice required in paragraph (1) of this subsection not fewer than 21 days prior to the new date.”.

Sec. 5. Repealers.

(a) Section 2 of the Coronavirus Public Health Extension Emergency Amendment Act of 2021, enacted June 17, 2021 (D.C. Act 24-79; 68 DCR 5600), is repealed.

(b) Section 2 of the Coronavirus Public Health Extension Temporary Amendment Act of 2021, effective May 19, 2021 (D.C. Act 24-99; 68 DCR 6446), is repealed.

Sec. 6. Fiscal impact statement.

The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement of the Budget Director as the fiscal impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

Sec. 7. Effective date.

This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), and shall remain in effect for no longer than 90 days, as provided for emergency acts of the Council of the District of Columbia in section 412(a) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 788; D.C. Official Code § 1-204.12(a)).