

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Catalina Rodriguez Lima, Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO 
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs	
	SUBJECT	City Council Resolution 21-0036R - Informational Hearing – Avoiding an Eviction Crisis	

DATE: July 12, 2021

TO The Honorable President and Members of the City Council

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MIMA) has shifted responsibilities to address the needs of the 50,000 foreign born individuals living in the City of Baltimore. Specifically, MIMA has focused on the following to ensure an equitable rental assistance program:

Technical assistance providers

As health and economic relief resources were made available to residents, MIMA guided multiple agencies to ensure programs were inclusive of immigrant communities regardless of language, immigrant status or the ability to access technology. To date, MIMA continues to work with Housing and MOCFS to ensure an equitable rental assistance program inclusive of immigrants. More specifically, MIMA has contributed with the following:

- Program design inclusive of immigrants: unnecessary questions like immigrant status or requiring a social security card or a Maryland ID
- Application availability in multiple languages
- Responding to fears of government by partnering with local community-based organizations to assist with intake (CASA, Latino Economic Development Center, and Southeast CDC)
- Program implementation and monitoring progress.

Multilingual Messaging and Accessibility

MIMA's role has been to evaluate outreach materials for translation and then work with a professional translation company to produce translated materials. Evaluating these materials also gave MIMA the opportunity to identify potential accessibility barriers for immigrants: For example, if a graphic included a phone number, a bilingual MIMA staff member would test call that number to determine whether those who were taking the calls were prepared to serve speakers of other languages. If the phone number was answered by City of Baltimore employees who could not provide assistance in other languages, MIMA would then offer to train staff and grant them access to a universal telephonic interpretation account at no cost to the agency. MIMA also encourages agencies to allow City residents to complete applications over the phone with the use of telephonic interpretation. Sometimes, when applications are translated, agencies are not able to process an application completed in another language, particularly languages like Mandarin, Korean, or Arabic with different character systems. In these instances, best practice is completion of the application over the phone with interpretation assistance so that the agency has an application completed by agency staff in English that can be efficiently processed.

Communications

In addition, MIMA has disseminated rental assistance information through the following **communication** channels:

- **MIMA's [Facebook](#) – Daily information in multiple languages**
 - To this date, MIMA has released 7 *Facebook posts* related to rental assistance
- **MIMA's Updates** via GovDelivery – Information in Multiple languages. These are posted to [MIMA's website](#).
 - To date, MIMA has released *20 written updates in multiple languages (English, Spanish, French, Korean, Mandarin and Arabic) regarding rental assistance.*
- **Spanish news broadcast every Friday:** partners with social media influencer Pedro Palomino and Johns Hopkins Centro Sol to share weekly updates in Spanish via [Somos Baltimore Latino's Facebook page](#) every Friday at 3pm.
 - To date, MIMA has promoted rental assistance in *21 Facebook Live events* in partnership with Somos Baltimore Latino.
- **Biweekly calls with community stakeholders.** MIMA hosts a biweekly call with community stakeholders. These calls are a great time to ask COVID-19 questions and receive real-time answers.
 - To date, MIMA has *hosted 7 presentations with community stakeholders* to provide updates about rental assistance
- **MIMA's website** <https://mima.baltimorecity.gov/coronavirus>. MIMA created a dedicated page to serve a central source of multilingual information. In addition, MIMA has been working closely with the Health Department to ensure the department's COVID-19 main website is available in multiple languages.

Outreach

Finally, MIMA has expanded **outreach** efforts to share information regarding rental assistance by implementing the following:

- In person outreach in partnership with CASA. On a weekly basis, CASA Promoters (community organizers) canvass neighborhoods to inform residents about health and economic resources including rental assistance.
- Case management support in partnership with Esperanza Center. Baltimore City residents may qualify for cash assistance and case management support to help navigate resources including rental assistance.
- Referral system for immigrants in need of support. MIMA's communication and outreach efforts have resulted in approximately 350 referrals to CASA, LEDC, SECDC, and MOCFS for assistance with rent.
- Tenants' Rights awareness. In partnership with MOCFS, Office of Civil Rights, CASA, Latino Economic Development Center, Southeast CDC, and Public Justice Center, MIMA has developed informational materials and community sessions to inform the immigrants about their rights.

MIMA will continue to work with city agencies and community partners to ensure rental assistance is available to residents regardless of language and immigrant status.

MIMA supports the passage of City Council Resolution 21-0036R

cc: Natasha Mehu
Nina Themelis