



**For Immediate Release**  
**December 19, 2020**  
**Updated: December 30, 2020**

## **Town of Princeton and Housing Initiatives of Princeton**

### **Announce New Agreement**

*Princeton Landlord-Tenant Mediation Program Responds to COVID-19 Housing Challenges*

***Princeton, NJ— December 19, 2020***

***Updated: December 30, 2020*** — At its December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, Princeton Council passed Resolution 20-383 authorizing an agreement with Housing Initiatives of Princeton (HIP) through which HIP will assist the municipality in administering the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds the town received from the federal government to promote housing stability. Mayor Liz Lempert and Council members recognized that, as Mayor Lempert said: “Too many Princeton residents have been hit hard by this pandemic and need some help to pay their rent. HIP has been providing Emergency Rental Assistance for years and is well situated to administer the \$319,527 of the CDBG that will go directly to landlords on behalf of tenants in need.”

#### **Record of Community Support**

Since 2004, HIP, a community-based non-profit organization, has been providing transitional housing with wrap-around services to low-income working families in the community. More recently, it has added emergency rental assistance to help Princeton area residents preserve their housing when they face challenges. The need for these services increased significantly this year as COVID-19 evolved from a health crisis to also become an economic crisis.

As Carol Golden, Chair of HIP noted, “The pandemic has had a devastating effect both economically and in health outcomes on our most vulnerable neighbors. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide these much-needed funds so that people can stay safely in their homes.”

#### **Innovative New Approach**

With the help of Judge Phil Carchman, Judge Debbie Poritz, and others, HIP has crafted the Princeton Landlord Tenant Mediation Program (PLTMP) which will require tenants and landlords to attend at least one virtual mediation session during which an independent third-party mediator will work with the parties to reach an agreement as to rental and other tenancy issues. With so many low-wage renters impacted by the pandemic-precipitated economic slowdown, this type of mediation and compromise will help increase the sustainability of housing stability efforts.

“It’s our hope that landlords will recognize the role that they can play in keeping their fellow Princetonians housed by accepting a discounted rental payment in some cases,” explained HIP Board member, Sarah Torian.

With a first successful pilot mediation session in early December, HIP plans to begin hosting many more mediation sessions in early 2021, enlisting the support of professionals who will volunteer their time to play the roles of mediator, tenant advocate, and translator.

“HIP has always embraced the idea of ‘Neighbors Helping Neighbors,’” explained Ms. Golden. “We have been heartened by the strong support we have received from community residents and town leaders who have helped us craft this new approach and who are helping us ensure that Princeton remains a diverse community where people from all walks of life can thrive.”

### **To Apply**

Tenants who are unable to pay their rent due to the economic impact of COVID-19 and are interested in applying should call 609-921-2328 or go directly to the HIP website: [housinginitiativesofprinceton.org](http://housinginitiativesofprinceton.org) to submit an application in English or Spanish.

### **Regarding Leases:**

Please be advised that in order to be eligible to receive CDBG funding for rental assistance through Housing Initiatives of Princeton (HIP), qualifying tenants will need to be listed on a valid lease. We urge landlords to review your tenants' leases to ensure that they are current and list all tenants by

name. HIP will not share the application or the leases with the municipality, and the funding source (HUD) does not generally require HIP to share information about individual applications.

**Regarding Applications:**

The first round of applications for CDBG rental assistance through Housing initiatives of Princeton (HIP) will extend through January 19th, 2021.

HIP will review the applications to determine:

- Eligibility for the program
- Level of need

We hope to help as many people as possible with the funds available. The actual number who will receive assistance will depend on the volume of the applications received, and we will prioritize those with the most need.

You will be notified by the end of January 2021 if you will receive assistance in this first round of funding.

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**For more information contact:**

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**Or visit: [www.housinginitiativesofprinceton.org](http://www.housinginitiativesofprinceton.org)**