



East Bay Community Law Center's Statement on COVID-19

Like many organizations across the country and the world, the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) is assessing what needs to change. We are examining what needs to change so that the health and safety of our staff, students and clients are prioritized equally. We are also examining what needs to change so that the long-term health and safety of our broader community remains fortified in times of uncertainty. We are making these decisions heavily, with the full knowledge that the current legal system creates and perpetuates deep inequities and disparities when it comes to the health and safety of our communities.

EBCLC represents more than thirty years of disrupting the impoverishment, incarceration and destruction of lives. We lean on this history of resilience and resolve during this time of change. We reaffirm our commitment to providing responsive, client-centered legal services in the areas of housing, health, immigration, education, youth defense and economic security, and we will continue to do so with the utmost respect for our clients. Moreover, we are voicing the concerns of our broad community, and recommending that our government partners take sensible, compassionate steps to advance long-term change in our legal system and value the safety of all people.

EBCLC's Recommendations for Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19:

1. In order to stabilize people whose incomes are impacted by employer shut-downs and reduced hours, EBCLC recommends that the:

- Mayors of Oakland and Berkeley enact a moratorium on unlawful detainer (eviction) proceedings, so that people who are unwell do not show up to packed courtrooms in order to preserve their housing and to provide relief to impacted workers who may be temporarily unable to pay their rent.
- Alameda County Sheriff stay wage garnishments and bank levies, so that people are not forced to choose their economic survival over personal and public health.

2. In order to ensure accommodations so people can follow health advisories, EBCLC recommends that the:

- Social Security Administration and the California Department of Social Services allow verbal certification for crucial benefits that usually require an in-person meeting, including SSI, General Assistance, and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants.
- California Department of Social Services suspend all welfare-to-work group activities, or at minimum not sanction beneficiaries who do not participate in these in-person gatherings.
- Alameda County Superior Court stop issuing failures-to-appear for traffic tickets, so that people won't be fined for avoiding crowded traffic courts.
- Mayors of Oakland and Berkeley place a moratorium on towing vehicles, so that people who have to stay inside don't risk losing their primary asset, or get saddled with fines and fees that quickly surpass the vehicle's value.



3. In order to protect vulnerable community members, EBCLC recommends that:

- Berkeley and Oakland, as Sanctuary Cities, reaffirm their institutional commitment to our undocumented communities and to all immigrant community members who may be the targets of xenophobic behavior.
- The City of Berkeley and the City of Oakland, as well as Caltrans, halt the removals of encampments, which have been declared safer than indoor shelters or navigation shelters by medical officials.
- The Alameda County Juvenile Court, the District Attorney, and County Probation take all necessary steps to protect community health by reducing the number of youth in custody, ensuring that youth who are in custody are safe and cared for, *and* preserving the due process and human rights of all youth by not subjecting them to quarantines in carceral settings.

We believe these crucial actions will ameliorate the impact of COVID-19 on our most vulnerable clients and communities. As cities, counties, public representatives, and community leaders, it is our responsibility to take bold action now.

Thank you,

East Bay Community Law Center

March 12, 2020