



Community Action Council

of Lewis, Mason & Thurston Counties

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2022

RESPONSE TO THURSTON COUNTY'S SUSPENSION OF ALL TREASURY RENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TRAP) CONTRACTS

On January 24, 2022, the Thurston County Internal Auditor provided his written monitoring report. His overall conclusion was: "ERA Programs are generally operating in accordance with state and federal guidelines." No finding of fraud or suspected fraud was made. After additional recommended research was performed, CAC determined no payment was made to anyone without proper eligibility documentation.

The auditor stated program compliance could be improved through enhancing fraud prevention procedures and internal controls and provided recommendations to enhance procedures and controls. CACLMT provided a response on February 14, 2022 thanking the auditor for the recommendations and seeking clarification because the new recommendations were inconsistent with prior County recommendations and did not align with the County Program Manager's recommendations. CACLMT requested all required policy changes be agreed upon at the County level and put in a written contract amendment for clarity and transparency.

The County Manager responded to this reasonable request by suspending the TRAP contracts issued to CAC as of 2/24/22 with absolutely no advance notice, no plan in place to ensure continuation of services to community households in desperate need of those services, and basing this suspension on inaccurate and mischaracterized results of the monitoring report.

The County Manager released inaccurate and defaming conclusions and accusations in conjunction with the suspension of the TRAP contracts issued to CAC as of 2/24/22 by claiming there were audit findings of suspected fraudulent payments. This was false as there were no findings in the audit, only recommendations for improving controls. The irreparable harm done by this mis-portrayal of our operations and the decision of contract suspension, jeopardizes our organization's ability to provide services to clients and harms vulnerable community members who are eligible for this critical funding. This suspension puts approximately 1,269 determined eligible households at risk of eviction and our organization's ability to spend the remaining \$8 million in funds to spend out these contracts. In addition, this halts the legislatively issued Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (SB5160) to continue as CAC is the fully operational rent assistance organization for Thurston County.

This does not align with the values, integrity, and intent of the collaborative partnerships facilitated by the Thurston County Commissioners with organizations such as ours. We continuously uphold the utmost ethics, professionalism, and transparency in disseminating this funding to the community. We want to assure the community, clients and partners that we are exploring our options to ensure critical services are continuing to be provided with respect, integrity, confidentiality, and shared values. It is our intention to continue to work with the County to find a resolution in disseminating these critical services to our community for those in need.

Contact: Kirsten York, CEO kirsteny@caclmt.org or 360-438-1100

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Lewis County

409 N. Tower Ave. Centralia, WA
98531
(360) 736-1800 Fax (360) 736-1801

Mason County

807 W. Railroad Ave. Shelton, WA
98584
(360) 436-8736 Fax (360) 437-8107

Thurston County

3020 Willamette Drive NE Lacey, WA
98516
(360) 438-1100 Fax (360) 431-7720