



October 24, 2023

Dear Mayor Bowser and members of the DC Council:

As the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners of ANC 1D, representing Mount Pleasant and northern Columbia Heights, we are writing to share our concern and frustration over the challenges our neighbors faced this month in attempting to access ERAP funds.

DC's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) portal opened to new applications on October 2nd, after a nearly seven month closure. However, 1D residents have reported facing a range of issues that prevented eligible tenants from submitting their applications.

First, the portal experienced an outage from late Tuesday, October 3 through Friday, October 6. While the portal was briefly online again over the holiday weekend (October 7 - 9), on October 10 it was announced that 3,500 applications had been received, and that the portal is now closed to new applications until January 1st. The outage caused frustration among residents, many of whom had been waiting to submit applications since March. It also caused challenges for community organizations, such as the Woodner Tenants Union, which had invested time and resources in planning to provide assistance to tenants applying to ERAP during the week of October 2.

In addition to the outage, at least four residents in 1D received an error message stating that they were ineligible for ERAP because they had received funds in the previous 12 months, even though that is not the case. While these residents attempted to resolve this issue via emails, submitting work tickets through the portal, and phone calls to the Department of Human Services, they reported long wait times, and were ultimately unable to resolve the issue before the portal closed.

Finally, residents who were able to open an application via the portal but were still completing their applications when the portal closed, were left confused as to the status of their application.

Residents applying for ERAP are already living with the stress and uncertainty of unstable housing. The 1D residents who reported challenges this month are all facing active eviction cases. The ERAP application process is arduous, and many residents must plan ahead to find the time and support needed to submit an application. Unfortunately, this month the ERAP application process served as a further source of stress for many residents. We urge the Mayor and Council to ensure that the ERAP portal and staff at DHS are prepared to provide a smooth and responsive application process to DC residents when the portal reopens in January.

ANC 1D voted to approve this letter at a properly noticed public meeting on October 23, 2023, by a vote of 5 yays to 0 nays.

On Behalf of the Commission.

Hannah Grigg
Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner
1D02