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March 24, 2020

VIA EMAIL ONLY (vpsa@umd.edu)

Ms. Patty Perillo,
Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Maryland
7999 Regents Drive
2108 Clarence Mitchel Building
College Park, MD 20742

Re: COVID-19 Advisory Letter dated March 20, 2020

Dear Ms. Perillo:

I am writing on behalf of the Prince George's Property Owners Association, Inc. in response to your letter dated March 20, 2020 to all students of the University of Maryland. My clients are extremely distressed regarding the confusion created from your directive to University of Maryland students to immediately leave the communities surrounding the University of Maryland.

Governor Hogan has stressed the need to limit all travel and while the Governor has not yet issued a "shelter in place" order, the recommendation from the State and Federal Governments is for people to remain in their homes. A leased home is a home, and for all of the students, including undergraduate and graduate students, who do not live in University owned housing, their homes are in and around College Park and other surrounding communities. The Governor's message directs the opposite of what you have told students in your March 20, 2020 letter. All single-family student houses and apartments are restricted by law to five unrelated residents, well under the 10-person gathering requirement. The Governor banned unnecessary travel, yet your directive suggests just that, especially on mass transit. Some of these students may have traveled to Spring Break destinations and should not be going elsewhere to share possible infections with older family members. These are by and large, young healthy people who could be carriers the COVID-19 virus. The recommendation of all medical experts is to limit contact of potential carriers with older persons. Many of our residents who lease homes from members of the Prince George's Property Owners Association have already stated they are staying in and around College Park so as not to possibly infect their more vulnerable family members or put those family



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members at risk unnecessarily, however, other residents have interpreted your March 20, 2020 letter as an official directive to vacate the surrounding communities. Effectively, your letter is in the form of an “evacuation order” from private housing which is not within your authority, nor is it a proper method of containment of the COVID-19 virus as has been cited by both the State and Federal Governments.

There are also legal issues that may arise in connection with your letter taken as an official directive for persons to violate their lease agreements. The lease between landlord and tenant is a contract unassociated with the University of Maryland. While some of my clients’ student residents are staying, others have indicated they are leaving based on your advice and have erroneously concluded that your directive grants them a reprieve from paying the rent due under the terms of their respective leases. The homes that are the subject of the leases are habitable and there is no basis to support a contention that a tenant should pack up and leave their home to move to a different home and put others at risk of contracting COVID-19. I understand the need for the University to have its on campus student housing vacated as a precaution for the University but the University has no basis to infringe upon the private leases of my clients. Your letter erroneously implies some type of federal or state mandate to vacate the City of College Park and other surrounding communities, which is not at all accurate and also not within the authority of the University of Maryland.

In this unique and rare situation of a virus pandemic, I understand your letter was attempting to provide guidance to all University of Maryland students in connection with COVID-19 and that the University is attempting to act in the best interest of University of Maryland students. The language used in your letter coming from a position of authority has created confusion and has exceeded the authority of your office. On behalf of the Prince George’s Property Owners Association, I request that you issue a statement to the University of Maryland Students clarifying your directives to vacate off-campus housing and state unequivocally that all students who live in off-campus housing in and around the City of College Park are encouraged to avoid travel and to stay in their local homes as has been stated by Governor Hogan.

My clients desire to work with the University of Maryland in this time of crisis. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



Walter W. Green

cc: Lisa Miller, President
Prince George’s Property Owners Association

