

Item V. B. CARES Act.
submitted by Erin Feichtinger,
at 10:42 AM.

May 19, 2020

Douglas County Board of Commissioners

RE: CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds

Board President Duda and members of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners,

The full impact of COVID-19 on our community has yet to be seen, but we know that the economic and health consequences fall more heavily on the vulnerable populations many of us serve. Already we are seeing an incredible increase in food pantry traffic, requests for emergency financial assistance, and anxiety about economic instability, food, and housing insecurity. We know that there is a secondary crisis coming when our community begins to recover, when restrictions lift, and months of bills come due all at once. It is imperative that a significant investment of funds be invested in stabilizing the housing of those in our community made vulnerable by COVID-19.

According to the City of Omaha's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) study, 49% of the roughly 70,000 renters in our community are considered rent-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income on rent. Data drawn from the American Community Survey estimates that 25,800 additional renter households in our community will be made vulnerable by the economic effects of COVID-19 and will therefore struggle to pay rent. Our neighbors are already feeling the pressure - an analysis of 211 calls shows 1,422 calls requesting rental assistance between March 15 and May 11 of this year, compared to just 745 in the same period last year. Our neighbors need help, and you stand in a position to answer their calls.

We ask that a portion of the Coronavirus Relief Funds, allocated to Douglas County through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, be used for tenant-based rental assistance. The federal government has determined that housing needs are an appropriate and necessary use of Coronavirus Relief Funds because stabilizing renters now will stabilize the economy in the future. Making sure renters can pay their bills means that landlords can pay their mortgages, and avoids adding additional stress to the social service system. Additionally, keeping people in their housing is critical to the physical health of our community in the midst of a pandemic. We cannot ask our vulnerable neighbors to stay at home if they do not have a home in which to stay.

The undersigned organizations stand ready and willing to help you get Coronavirus Relief Funds to the people we serve and ensure that those of our neighbors impacted by COVID-19 will not lose their housing as a result.

Thank you for standing with us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Together

Women's Fund of Omaha

inCommon

Restoring Dignity

Legal Aid of Nebraska

Spark CDI

Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance

Inclusive Communities

Family Housing Advisory Services

Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Omaha NE

Metro Area Continuum of Care for the Homeless (MACCH)

RISE

Nebraska Appleseed

Coalition for a Strong Nebraska

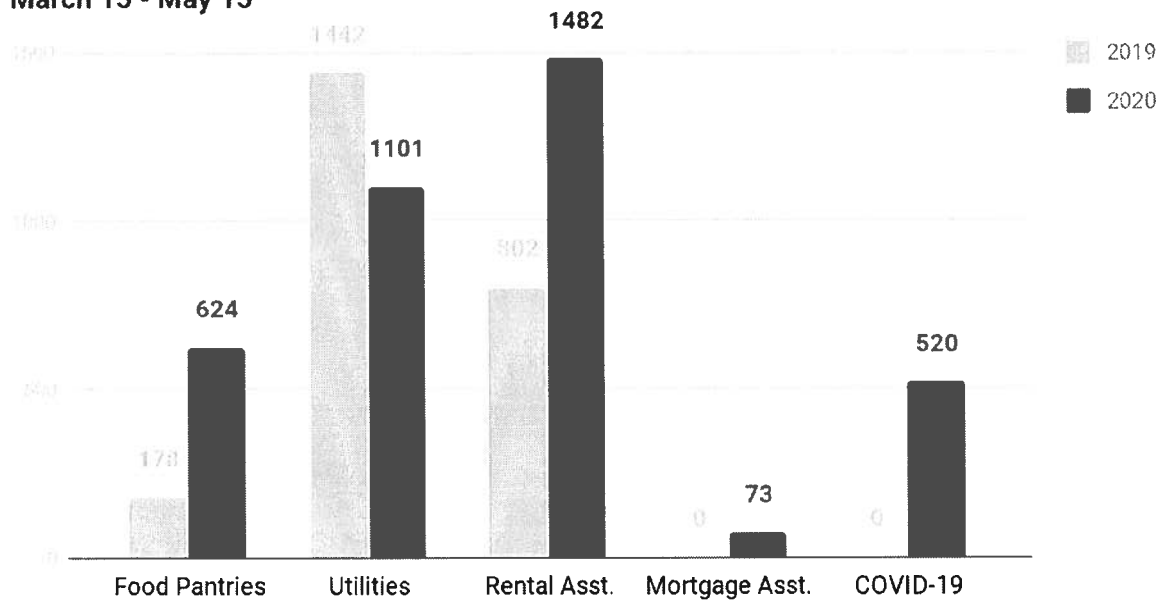
Voices for Children

New Leaders Council

Apartment Association of Nebraska

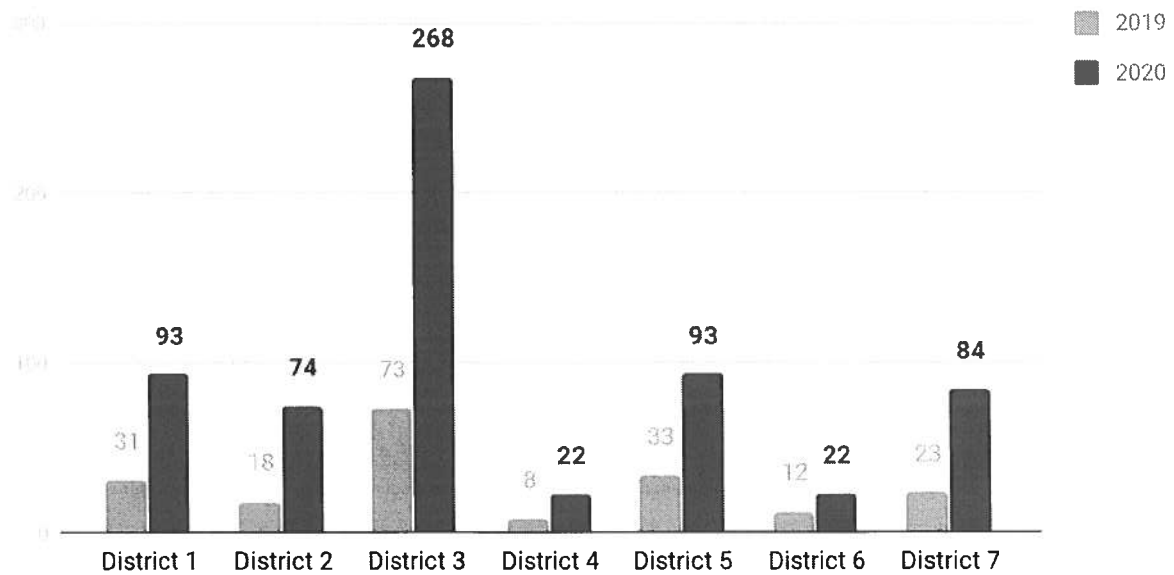
Douglas County 211 Requests

March 15 - May 15



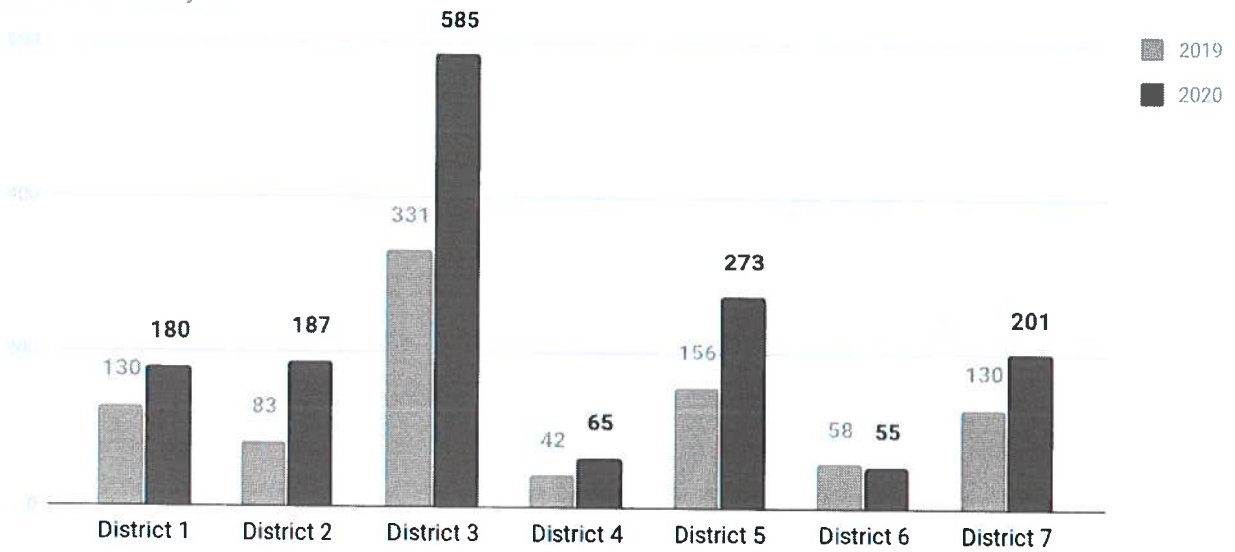
211 Requests for Food Pantries

March 15 - May 15

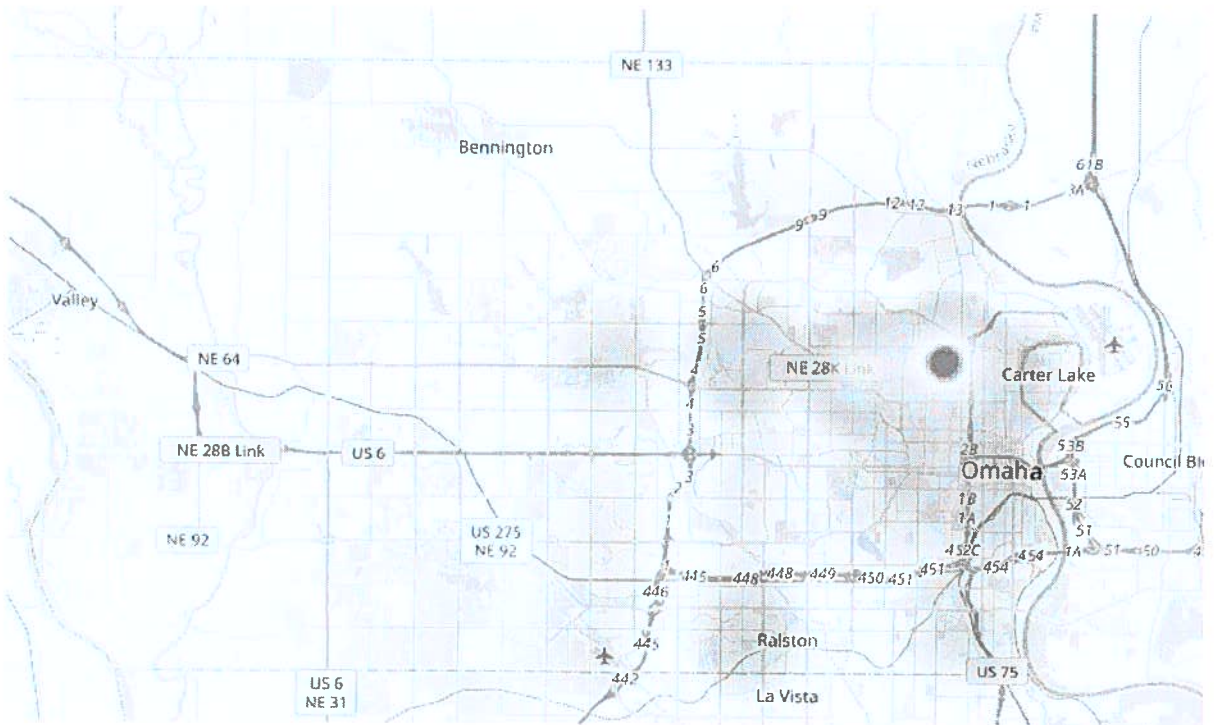


211 Requests for Rental Assistance

March 15 - May 15



Heat Map: 211 Requests for Rental Assistance



So far this year, more than **1 in 100** Douglas County households called 211 seeking rental assistance. In some zip codes, nearly **2% of the entire population** called 211 about finding help for paying rent.