

January 13, 2025

Mayor Danny Avula, City Council Chair Cynthia Newbille, City Council Vice Chair Katherine Jordan and Council members:

From January 6th in the afternoon to January 11th in the afternoon, Richmond households and many businesses were completely without access to potable water. While this crisis unfolded, tenants across the city could not work and lost significant income due to closures caused by the water system failure.

Recognizing the severity of this crisis, Mayor Avula declared a state of emergency in the city on Sunday, January 5th, which the City Council confirmed on January 8th (RES. 2025-R002). Under §44-146.21 (C), Mayor Avula, as local director of emergency management, has broad discretion to “control, restrict, allocate or regulate” goods and services since we remain under the emergency declaration. **In light of this regional emergency, the Richmond Housing Justice Collective (RHJC) and our community partners are demanding that the City Council and the Office of the Mayor take action. We demand:**

1. The Mayor and City Council must acknowledge the need for an eviction moratorium, as demanded by their constituents and explore every avenue possible under a local emergency to enact a moratorium citywide.
2. The Mayor and City Council must call on the Chief Judge of the Richmond City General District Court to declare a state of emergency and temporarily suspend all eviction related cases past the first quarter of 2025.
3. The Mayor and City Council must use their power to allocate emergency funds for rent relief from the City budget.

This suspension will give residents time to make up for income they lost due to the water crisis and get current on their rent. We can't expect residents that are experiencing water and food insecurity to pay rent on time.

In April of 2023, City Council declared a housing crisis in Richmond. Soaring rents, low incomes, and limited tenant protections have made Richmond the second highest evictor in the country according to the Eviction Lab. Experts consider our city one of the most predatory toward tenants in the United States. Over 83,000 Richmonders are rent burdened and more than 25% of Richmonders pay over half of their income on rent. In a community where citizens struggle to pay rent even under normal circumstances, these days of lost income have devastated tenants.

RHJC sent out a survey which had over 80 responses from residents across the city. The stories of the respondents are attached to this letter. Through these stories, we see that hourly workers in the hospitality sector, our school system, and other critical industries bore the greatest burden during this crisis. Of the respondents, over 85% of them are afraid they will not be able to pay rent next month.

The eviction crisis disproportionately impacts working class, minority, and immigrant communities. This emergency has further accelerated the crisis. Historic neglect and lack of investment in the long-term health of our water infrastructure should not result in more Richmonders facing eviction.

Each of you campaigned on solving the housing crisis. The city must make its residents and their economic security a priority. You have sworn to represent us, and you must use your power to prevent unnecessary suffering. If you don't act, Richmonders will be displaced through no fault of their own and inaction on your part.

With Power,

The Richmond Housing Justice Collective:

The Richmond Chapter of Virginia Organizing
New Virginia Majority
Richmond Chapter of the Democratic Socialist of America
Richmond Tenants Union
Legal Aid Justice Center
Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc.

With additional solidarity from:

The Richmond Chapter of SONG
Virginia Student Power Network
Sunrise Richmond
Richmond for All
Party for Socialism and Liberation in Virginia

Richmond Education

Ascend

Stories from Richmonders Impacted by the Water Crisis
Stories Gathered by the Richmond Housing Justice Collective from Thursday January 9th to Sunday
January 12, 2025

- No drinking water or toilets were available during the water outage, so we were closed Wednesday and I stayed home on Tuesday (also due to ice on the roads).
- I work in a restaurant so my wage is heavily reliant on tips. I have been unable to work since Monday evening, and our boss said the schedule will be switched around for next week so that everyone can get at least some hours, but many of us will see a loss in hours and income.
- I work at a massage studio - and without working restrooms, laundry facilities, or handwashing stations, we are unable to fulfill the basic functions of this work.
- I work in a clinical massage setting, we are unable to operate without the means to safely wash our hands and tools or launder our linens
- I am a server and have been out of work all week. January/February is already a slow season for this industry. Now, this water crisis will be cutting in. I have had no income come in at all since everything has been shut down. It sets me back an extreme amount between: rent, groceries, utilities, and expenses for my dog. It's been very stressful wondering when I'll be able to go back to work and have an income again. It's unfair to many people who have been out of work and lost all sources of income and are waiting around hopelessly.
- I work in a restaurant and we had to close due to the water issue. The restaurant has been closed for two days, and my general manager says he suspects we could be closed for 3 more days or so. This is detrimental to my income for the month and thereby will affect my ability to pay my bills.
- I am a massage therapist and we rely on cleaning tools, linens, and frequent handwashing for the health and safety of ourselves and clients. With all of these options gone, I've lost over \$300 worth of work since the advisory was issued. Each day that the water has not turned on I have had to cancel clients, with no telling when I am able to begin accepting them again. So far I have missed an entire week of work
- unable to work the entire week due to unsafe water
- I work as a licensed massage therapist in Richmond, VA, and live in Byrd Park. Because of the water shortage and boil advisory, we are unable to perform our work out of concern for health safety. Hand-washing, dish-washing, and washing linens is critical to ensure the safety of ourselves and our clients. Because of the City shortage, I have lost almost an entire week of income. I am deeply concerned about my ability to pay rent and utilities this month and next.
- I work in food service and I was fortunate that Tuesday and Wednesday are my usual days off. I worked Thursday, and it's extremely uncomfortable to be responsible for washing dishes and sanitizing preparation areas without clean running water.
- I am a massage therapist and our space had to close due to not having water accessible.
- I'm currently working at Starbucks 14 hours this week after being scheduled 21 and will likely not be able to get compensated for the lost hours
- I work for HCPS in the health clinic... schools are closed so I've been out of work 3 weeks really now, but yes I've been affected by the water crisis
- While I am not worried about rent currently, I was out of work for 4 regular days. Rent isn't my only issue, as I'm working on paying back a medical bill. Our boss has told us he's working on hazard pay, but I'm not sure when that's coming.

- While my employment was not affected, I am not so arrogant as to think that because I'm fine my neighbors are. I am fine and want my neighbors to be fine too. The moratorium would be helpful, especially considering the city's negligence in following best practices with our water supply.
- My employer has been closed because there has been no water
- I have not been able to work since the water issues have happened. I am worried that once this is over, they will charge residents for their water, gas, and electricity usage when we had no choice but to boil our water. I'm worried about these upcoming bills, how am I going to pay them when my work was cut?
- job closed. can not work
- Work was closed for several days all of which were days I would've worked so I've lost about half my weekly pay.
- My workplace was still requiring employees to attend work during the crisis, while there was no working restroom on-site. Any shifts missed during the crisis were still counted as absences (and 4 absences will lead to termination), thus some of my coworkers are no longer with us.
- Clinics were closed later offered work from home option but not offered pay for the days if we didn't have PTO which was wiped out due to holiday closures
- I work in the restaurant industry as a server and due to the way we get paid in tips I rely heavily on people going out to eat. Due to the contaminated water, business was slow and I missed out on work all week. Because of that my upcoming check will be much lower.
- I work in a restaurant and we were unable to open due to a lack of water, and the boil notice once water pressure and flow was resumed
- I have two part time jobs to sustain my living. One of these jobs, I have been unable to work for several days. While I have savings, I have car repairs coming up as well and without work, I will dip greatly into my savings. I will be losing at least a few hundred dollars because of me not being able to work. This has caused extreme financial stress. If I did not have any savings, I would not be able to pay rent. I know so many people here in Richmond live paycheck to paycheck. Pause evictions to allow residents to obtain appropriate funds due to their loss of income!
- I work at a restaurant that just opened two months ago. I took a few days off for Christmas to visit my family and on top of that, we have been pretty slow starting up. My paychecks are just barely making ends meet as they are but I missed 3 shifts this week due to being closed for the water outage and I don't know if I will make February rent.
- I work at a locally owned salon and this caused the salon, which employs over 20 commission and hourly based employees, to be closed for 4 days. For those living pay check to pay check, this loss of income will have big impacts. This is not a job we can work from home and it will have consequences on our books for weeks to come.
- The restaurant I work at has been closed since Tuesday, and I have now missed 3 days of work. Tonight (1/10) we will open with a limited menu and take out only, so even returning to work today will not pay out to a normal friday night. I will not be able to pay my rent because of this.
- I am reaching out to share how the current crises have directly impacted me. I recently received a summons for unlawful detainer for unpaid rent. As a substitute teacher, I am only paid for the days I work, and with the school closures due to the snowstorm and boil water advisory, I have had no income for weeks. My landlord has told me I must vacate before the court orders a judgment, which requires me to pay \$4,200—an amount I simply cannot afford. This situation has

left me at risk of homelessness, with just weeks left on my lease ending February 5. I urge you to advocate for a temporary halt to evictions during this crisis to protect residents like me who are struggling under these extraordinary circumstances.

- I work part time at an Henrico elementary school as an interventionist, which had to temporarily close due to the unsanitary water hazards. Having lost significant income already due to the holidays, reductions in hours, health issues, and the loss of my primary income, to lose what little I would've been paid this week has me doubting my ability to next month's expenses (I already couldn't pay most of this month's).
- I lost a quarter of my monthly income due to the water situation, when I was already in a vulnerable position. I really needed this week of work more than usual and not being able to go had left me with less than \$10 in my bank account and unable to buy food or water
- I am a hairstylist. If I am not at my salon, I am not only NOT making money, but also losing money by having to cancel on clients. Doing so eats into my other clients time as I play a mean game of client Tetris trying to work them back into my schedule. As a licensed cosmetologist my top priority will always be my clients health and safety therefore I am adhering strictly to protocol. This means I will not be able to return to work full steam until the boil advisory is lifted. I have not worked since Saturday 1/4.
- I work in food service. We closed 1/7/25-?? As of this moment we don't have a return day set. My husband and I work together and lost dual income for a whole week.
- I have been out of work for a week, and I work 5/6 days a week. Times are tough. Even when I work doubles I'm just making my bills, now I'm out of a lot of money and my bills don't stop racking. We still don't have a final answer when we can reopen. And it's nothing we can control.
- My employment was affected because my employer was unable to provide water for flushing the toilet and for sanitation so we were forced to close. We are still closed because Hanover County still doesn't have waterfully restored. I work in Hanover County. I'm extremely worried about how many days that I've missed work and if I'll be able to pay my rent next month because the amount of work that I've missed is equal to and could ultimately be greater than 1/3 of my rent. My partner and I also contracted the noro virus during the water outage and were unable to have enough water for sanitation at home. We collected and melted snow to flush the toilet but were only able to do so 1 or 2 times per day.
- I'm a barber and the barbershop can't open with no running water
- My bank account was a bit low after the holidays, so I picked up multiple shifts and was going to work doubles to make sure I can pay my rent this month. Then, the boil advisory happened and my place of business closed for 4 days and all the doubles I picked up, I could no longer work. All my savings is my rent money for this month and this could financially impair me for the entire year.
- I work at a carwash and it has basically been closed all week not only due to inclement weather, but the loss of water affected the water pressure at our site. I am out a whole week of pay.
- I work in Chesterfield so my job did have water, however after several days accumulated of me going with very minimal hygiene practices, I didn't feel comfortable coming to the workspace. However this isn't a matter of comfort alone. My job requires us to move packages & do physical labor throughout the day. By the time I get back home I need to properly wash up myself & my clothes. It's a matter of public health & personal wellbeing with numerous viruses going around the US. The risk of contracting one is heightened if folks don't have access to clean water to kill

germs/bacteria.

- I was able to work (I work remotely) but due to times of free water distro and disability, couldn't get to sites. I ended up paying for water when I could find it which might be counted as loss of income? I also have an open wound so I couldn't shower even when my water did come back on.
- I was already behind on rent and had several caretaking opportunities this week that were cancelled due to the water crisis. The money I made was supposed to help me at least get almost half of rent but I ended up having to miss out and I'm once again set back while already being unemployed.
- I'm a full time server and I make 99% of my income from tips, I work pay check to paycheck and cannot afford to miss a whole week of work especially during the slow season/sick season. My establishment and home did not have any water pressure or clean water for a week. My job was closed completely and now im struggling financially
- My place of work was shut down since the winter storm and I have no income coming in for February rent.
- *En mi hogar nos vimos afectados en que no tuvimos agua para para cocinar ni limpiar y no podíamos comprar agua por que yo estoy enferma de de neumonia diabetes retención de liquidos estoy en tratamiento no puedo trabajar y mi pareja le recortaron horas por el clima y ahora por el corte de agua no teníamos agua para el toilet fue algo muy fuerte*
 - English translation: In my home we were affected in that we had no water for cooking or cleaning and we could not buy water because I am sick with pneumonia diabetes fluid retention I am under treatment I can not work and my partner had his hours cut because of the weather and now because of the water outage we have had no water for the toilet, it was something very hard.
- *La verdad El empleo está muy malo no hay atrabajo y estamos afligidos x lo de la Renta q no sea Aya como pagar sin empleo no hay nada*
 - English translation: The truth is that employment is very bad, there is no work and we are distressed by the income that is not coming. How to pay without employment there is nothing.
- *Por falta de agua no he podido trabajar*
 - English translation: because of the water I was not able to work
- *Por la nieve no puedo trabajar que las escuelas están cerradas y ese es mi entrada de dinero*
 - English translation: Because of the snow, I was not able to work because the schools are closed and this is my income source.
- *Si me afecto porque estoy atrasada con mi renta por no tener mi trabajo y las escuelas están cerradas y ese es mi trabajo ojalá puedan ayudarme por me preocupa*
 - English translation: Yes it affects me because I am behind with my rent because I don't have my job and the schools are closed and that is my job I hope you can help me because I am worried about it.
- *Afecta en los ingresos en mi caso nos cancelaron un día de trabajo debido a la emergencia y es algo que al final de mes afecta, aún esperamos pagos de electricidad.*
 - English translation: In my case, we had to cancel a day of work due to the emergency and it is something that affects our income at the end of the month, we are still waiting for electricity payments.
- *Pues a mi me afectó en mis ingresos por q con mi venta de comida no pude vender porque no*

había agua

- English translation: Well, it affected my income because I could not sell my food because there was no water.
- *Debido a la contaminación del agua, la empresa donde trabajo se vio afectada ya que el trabajo que hago el agua es de suma importancia.*
 - English translation: Due to the water contamination, the company where I work was affected since the work I do water is of utmost importance.
- *Estaba trabajando en el museo de Richmond y lo cerraron*
 - English translation: I was working at the Richmond museum and they closed it.
- I am a server/bartender and the restaurant i work at was closed due to the water outage
- Due to being a service worker in food, I am already paid below what I should be, meaning because my restaurant was closed, I lost a significant amount of income. I worked maybe 8 hours this week total with shortened staff and open hours, and with the additional snow, i will probably not work for the next couple of days, leaving me with over a week of missed income. with how my paycheck fell the beginning of this month, i paid rent on the last day possible before late fees, but because of the two-3 day processing time, i already owe \$400 on top of my usual \$1300, meaning there is no possible way i am going to be able to make payment. My apartment complex is incredibly horrible and if you make even one late payment, you have an eviction notice in your mail box or rubber banded to your door within a week. im terrified and anxious waiting for it to show up and knowing im not going to be able to do anything
- *Es bien complicado, y más difícil con niños, las tiendas estaban abarrotadas, las personas peleando por agua como si fuera una guerra y lo peor muchas personas que no tienen un carro para salir y comprar y otras personas que no tenían ni para comprar un paquete de agua lamentablemente es la realidad de nuestra comunidad. Dios nos ayude 🙏 🙏*
 - English translation: It is very complicated, and more difficult with children, the stores were crowded, people fighting for water as if it were a war and the worst thing is that many people do not have a car to go out and buy it and other people did not even have enough to buy a pack of water, unfortunately this is the reality of our community, God help us 🙏 🙏
- I missed 3 days of work and the 2 days I did work were shorter than usual. I'm in the process of getting back on my feet from not having a job or steady income for most of the summer and I faced almost being evicted last year. I'm in a tight financial spot still because I haven't fully caught up with my bills and I'm afraid I won't be able to make all of my bills payments in time. I've faced a lot of financial hardship and the water outage really set me back financially.
- *[Se cerro] el restaurante por casual de agua me preocupa no tener los pagos*
 - English translation: They closed the restaurant because of the water. I am worried about not having the payments.
- *Se suspendieron las labores debido a la falta de agua en el restaurante que [no] trabajo por 4 días así mismo esto afectará en el pago de servicios y renta al no tener el ingreso suficiente.*
 - English translation: Work was stopped due to the lack of water in the restaurant that has been not working for 4 days and this will also affect the payment of utilities and rent due to the lack of sufficient income.
- The hospital went on diversion and had to cancel surgical cases.

- Hello, I work in food service (*redacted name for safety*) we were unable to open our doors due to the water issue and not being able to handle food. It's been almost a week out of work now and I'm afraid that it will greatly affect my payments on my rent in the next few days.
- My place of employment, (*redacted name for safety*) was forced to close Tuesday and Wednesday January 7th and 8th due to having no running water. I walked to work both days to find out personally the business was closed. Employer will not be paid for missed days. Working for minimum wage and having an unpaid holiday (New Years Day) included in this pay period, I will absolutely not have enough money to pay rent this month.
- I work 3 restaurant jobs, all of which could not operate without clean water. My rent is \$1530/month with no utilities included. I have to work ~80hours per week to make it for rent and bills, all due within the first week of the month.
- Since my job lost all water pressure, thus no bathrooms, so our office had to close. Meaning no payment for hourly workers like me.
- We had to close a full week not to mention buy extra supplies with money for bills that I could not afford so I could have access to clean water
- *No he trabajado toda la semana ningún día porque en el trabajo cerraron por la falta de agua y por la contaminación del agua. desde la primera nevada no hemos trabajado porque dijeron que se habian rotó las tuberias agua*
 - English translation: I have not worked all week any day because at work they closed due to lack of water and water contamination, since the first snowfall we have not worked because they said they had broken the water pipes.
- I was unable to work due to water outage and power
- Both of my jobs were closed for. The entirety of the water crisis and due to that I missed out on hundreds of dollars of income. You can budget and plan all you want but when the city fails you like this all of that goes out the window.
- can't work to pay bills
- I work part time and only get paid if I work. My check will be short.
- Because of the water outage, the restaurant I work at had to close and I lost at least half a paycheck due to this issue.
- My place of work had to close its kitchen because of the water contamination; Meaning I was taken off several shifts where I was assigned to cook.
- The restaurants my fiancé and I both work at were closed for 4 days of our work week
- I work in a restaurant. We closed for a week.
- *el restaurante no abrió por el motivo que no había agua 3 días sin trabajo no poder cocinar*
 - English translation: The restaurant did not open because there was no water for three days. Without work you're not able to cook.
- I have been out of work for a week now (1/6/25-1/12/25) as a result of the water emergency. I am a VCU student who works two part-time restaurant jobs to support myself. Both of my jobs were closed all week which resulted in me earning no wages at all for a quarter of this month. Unfortunately, I was also out of work the week prior to this emergency (12/29/24-1/4/25) due to illness, and have only worked one shift this month (on 1/5/25). Spending half the month without earning any wages absolutely has me worried for my financial state come Feb 1 when rent is due.
- I wait tables as my main job to support myself and my two children. Initially we weren't even a part of the boil advisory. I missed work Monday because of the snow and then 4 more days. As a

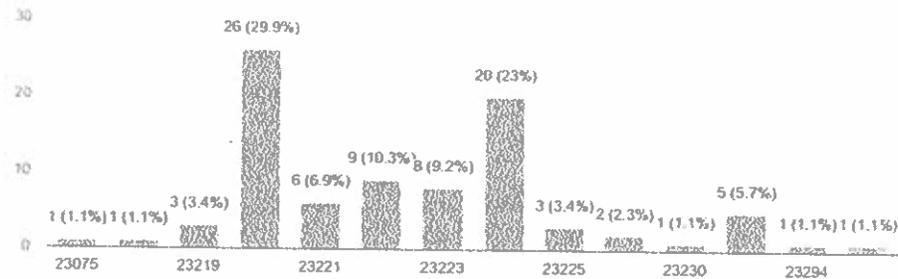
waitress, my job was literally not open to the public and once we opened on Friday it was limited being the water was still inaccessible. In addition, you have a whole staff of waitresses pushing each other off their shifts because everyone's need for money exceeds the other. As a waitress, no customers equal no pay being there's no tips

- My job was closed Monday through Wednesday and I'm a contractor so I just didn't get paid
- I work for the city of Richmond hourly due to us not having water we had to shut down

Other Survey Question Responses:

What is your zip code? ¿Cuál es su código postal?

87 responses



23220- 26 responses

23224- 20 responses

23222- 9 responses

23223- 8 responses

23221- 6 responses

23225- 3 responses

23219- 3 responses

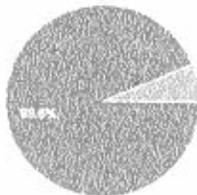
23227- 2 response

Outside the city responses-10

No answer- 8 response

Were you unable to work or experienced loss of income because of the Richmond water outage? ¿No pudo trabajar o sufrió una pérdida de dinero al fallo en el suministro de agua de Richmond?

94 responses

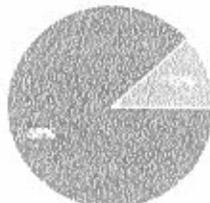


Yes
No

yes → 93.6%

Are you worried that you will be unable to pay your rent due to the loss of income from the citywide water outage? ¿Le preocupa no poder pagar el alquiler de ingresos por el fallo en el suministro de agua?

92 responses



Yes
No

yes → 88%

