

22 June 2020
To BYU Administration,

In wake of the passing of Trevor Lee, a UVU student who was living and working in student housing at the time of his death due to COVID-19, BYU students as well as other students living in BYU approved housing are concerned for their well-being and their educational futures for Fall semester during the ongoing pandemic.

In March, students were strongly encouraged to return home/leave campus due to the outbreak of COVID-19. This was necessary because students in dormitories and approved off-campus housing are ill-equipped to cope with the circumstances of social distancing. The conditions of student housing often include separation from family, shared spaces, and close proximity to other students. Following BYU's announcement in March, students faced diverse challenges as they tried to comply with the school's recommendation. Many students experienced a loss of employment, excessive travel costs, and the constraints of housing agreements. A major challenge was the financial strain of relocating to safer housing situations when rental companies would not release students from their contracts, even in the face of real threats to their health and well-being. Those with compromised immune systems, elevated mental health risks, and family circumstances/losses were unable to live in their housing units but unable to terminate their contracts.

The events of the pandemic have revealed a number of issues in the BYU approved off-campus housing system. We (a group of concerned BYU students) have gathered data from stakeholders and outlined suggestions for policy changes moving forward to protect the interests and well-being of students. This information, including numerous first-hand accounts of student experiences in the wake of the campus closure, have been gathered through the Instagram account @provo23b. We hope that our recommendations in this letter help prevent future deaths and illnesses by advocating for a safer learning environment in the Fall 2020 semester.

Our Goals

- That students' input factor into University decision-making
- That the rights and safety of students be prioritized in new policy development
- That financial/legal aid for students be strengthened during the pandemic, such as releasing students from their leases if necessary
- That off-campus housing provide better living and safety conditions for students going forward
- That students are provided additional support in navigating their housing agreements
- That all available steps are taken to ensure students do not face an avoidable repeat of the current situation

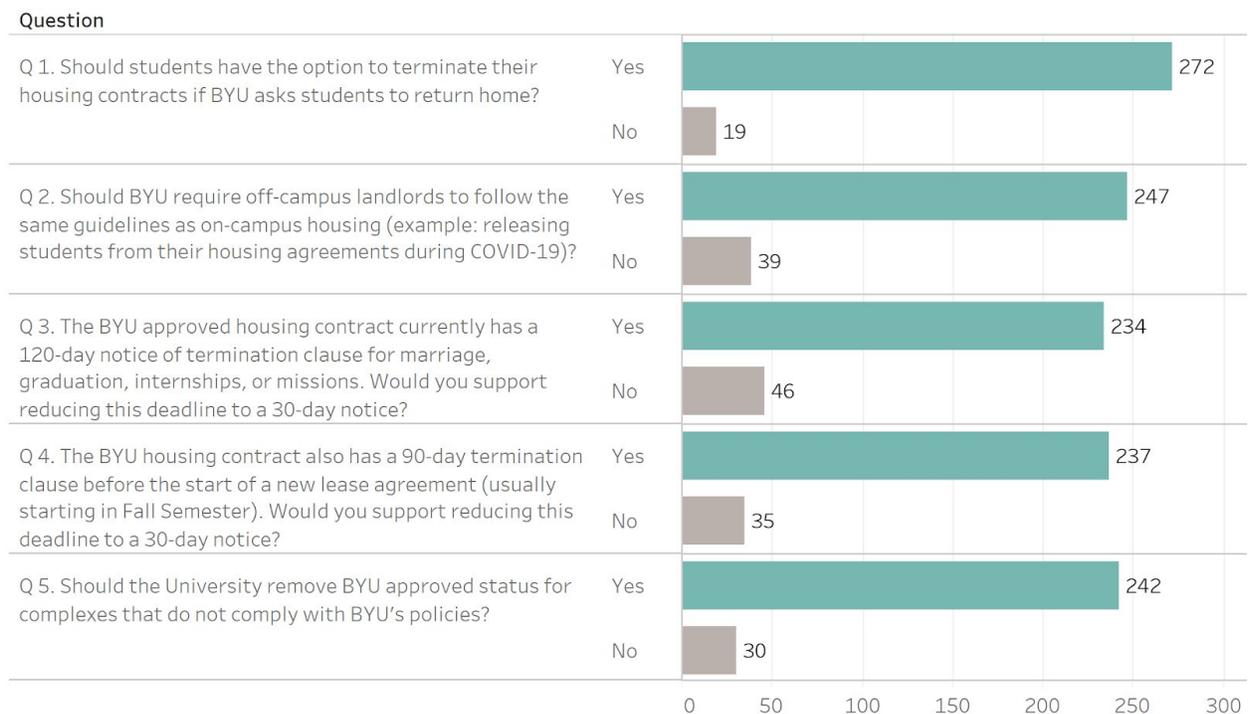
Poll Data

A series of polls conducted on the Instagram account @provo23b served to gauge student opinion on a variety of BYU approved housing matters. The polls were public, and the majority of respondents were BYU students or residents of BYU approved housing. Other parties, including BYU off campus housing providers (such as Redstone Residential employees), responded to the polls. The questions and corresponding responses are available below.

Proposed Policies for BYU Going into Fall Semester

This proposal summarizes poll results and outlines recommendations to address the physical, mental and financial risks students face in returning to school this fall. These recommendations are based on the feedback of nearly 300 poll respondents, as well as the experiences of students who have generously shared their stories. Though the policies may not be COVID-proof, we hope that serious consideration of student perspectives has the real capability to save lives, including those of students, faculty, and employees of BYU off-campus housing providers. Without understanding student perspectives, policies may fail to address student needs or mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and avoidable risks. We are grateful for your time in reviewing the following data and recommendations.

Section 1: BYU Housing Contract Reform



Recommendations:

- We want a new BYU approved housing contract written that protects students, especially in the event of a second outbreak of COVID-19
- Require that BYU approved off-campus housing complexes follow the same procedures as on-campus housing in the event of an emergency situation, or will result in termination of the complexes' BYU approved housing status
- Reduce the 120-day requirement to 30 days for students to notify their landlords of marriage, missions, graduation, or internships to terminate their leases (everyone's plans are in flux due to COVID)
- Reduce the 90-day cancellation requirement for fall housing to 30 day's notice

- If BYU asks students to leave campus and go home for ANY reason, require landlords to comply and permit students to have the option to be released from their housing obligations from the date that the university notifies students
- Include special exceptions for students who wish to leave school and/or terminate their leases for:
 - International students
 - Students who wish to return to their nation of origin
 - Students whose living situations are impacted by border closures
 - Students whose families are financially or otherwise affected by catastrophic events or political impact around the world, including but not limited to:
 - Pandemics
 - Wars
 - Refugee situations
 - Deportation
 - Etc.
 - Students who consider their physical safety to be in danger on the premises of their approved housing, including but not limited to:
 - High-risk students during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Students who have received physical threats
 - Students who physically, mentally, financially, and/or emotionally cannot or should not reside at their contracted housing, including but not limited to:
 - Students with disabilities
 - Students who are suffering from injuries
 - Students with mental health issues
 - Students who experience harassment, sexual assault, racism, or any other degradation to their person
 - Students who lose their jobs
 - Students' whose living situations are affected by their families' suffering catastrophic circumstances, including but not limited to:
 - Significant financial loss
 - Job loss
 - Homelessness
 - Domestic abuse
 - etc.
- Provide a form for students to fill out for their BYU approved housing provider to terminate their lease in the event of an emergency where students need to return home
 - Make said form easily accessible and visible on the BYU housing portal for students
- Revoke BYU approved housing status for management companies/landlords that refuse to comply with university policies

Section 2: Legal Recourse

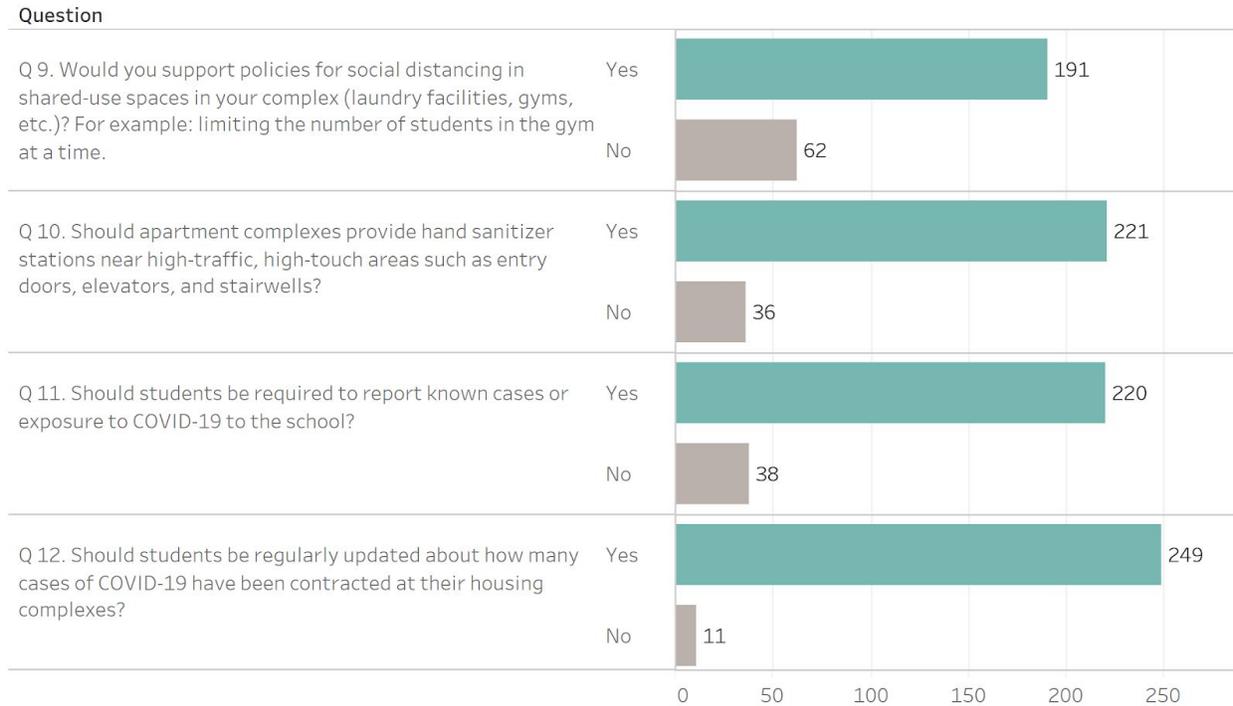
| Question | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Q 6. Do students need better resources to identify and understand their housing rights? | Yes | 251 |
| | No | 19 |
| Q 7. Should students have a better way to report landlords who don't comply with housing agreements? | Yes | 263 |
| | No | 9 |
| Q 8. Currently, the Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (the organization for resolving BYU student housing disputes) has an appeals process that goes back to the same judge. Should this be changed, so that appeals are not handled by the same person? | Yes | 201 |
| | No | 45 |

Recommendations:

- Publish general guidelines for students to understand what qualifications allow them to terminate their leases, effective immediately
 - Have these guidelines be emailed out to all university students and faculty.
 - Make guidelines available in the BYU student housing portal and on the BYU OCH website
- Reform the BYU Off-Campus Housing department
 - Give BYU OCH more power to monitor and penalize harmful actions by landlords/management companies handling BYU housing.
 - Establish an objective, unbiased oversight committee of professors to oversee landlords/management companies of BYU housing to determine what action should be taken by the university against landlords who do not comply
 - Have a form easily accessible in the BYU housing portal for students to file complaints against their landlords/management companies that go directly to the oversight committee appointed by the university
 - Require the oversight committee to review all filings by students and meet to discuss findings on a weekly basis
 - Require the oversight committee to investigate potential breaches of local laws and regulations by BYU off campus housing providers
 - One example would be: not providing handicapped parking or other reasonable accommodations for disabled persons
 - Regularly contact students about their housing conditions/treatment from their landlords/management companies
 - Report said conditions to BYU administration on a regular basis
- Reform the Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution
 - Increase staff to handle the influx of requests for mediation and arbitration to reduce wait time.
 - Reform the CPCR process for mediation/arbitration
 - Have an appeals process that does not lead straight back to the same judge

- Have the capability to appeal to higher courts (Utah district court, etc.)
 - Have more than one judge decide on landmark decisions for students, to remove potential bias
- Reform the BYU approved housing agreement (*section 1*)

Section 3: Mitigating the Spread of COVID-19 in BYU Housing complexes



Recommendations:

- Require students who choose to attend Fall semester to sign a disclosure agreement that students will report any known exposure to the COVID-19 virus to the university within 24 hours of discovering exposure to the virus
 - Regularly remind students of this obligation via mass message to students
 - Require students to fill out a short survey each week to explain if they have had any contact with the virus
 - Report all information regarding potential exposure to COVID-19 to housing complexes of students who have been exposed
 - Make sure students give permission firsthand to sharing their health information with the housing complexes who can alert other residents to potential exposure
 - Report relevant findings to each complex/landlord weekly at minimum
 - Require that complexes/landlords notify their residents of potential exposure within 24 hours of each notice from the university and health officials
 - If landlords/complexes refuse to share information regarding potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus with their residents within 24 hours after each update, revoke their BYU approved housing status
 - Have the BYU OCH committee determine potential consequences for complexes/landlords that do not comply with this requirement

- Limit the number of students permitted inside amenities/public spaces at one time
 - Wristbands for gyms/pools
 - Temperature checks before entering, have available in the office of the complex
- Frequent cleaning of/hand sanitizer stations available at:
 - Door handles
 - Elevators
 - Handrails
 - Laundry rooms
 - Other commonly touched surfaces

Section 4: Financial Aid

| Question | | | |
|--|-----|--|-----|
| Q 13. BYU announced a COVID-19 financial aid fund for students but placed a June 1st deadline to apply. Should BYU extend the deadline for students with ongoing or unexpected financial difficulties? | Yes |  | 213 |
| | No |  | 34 |

Recommendations:

- Extend the deadline for students to apply for financial aid from the university
 - Message all students that during the pandemic, any student can apply for special financial aid at any time
- Create a new application form for students to apply for financial aid during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Allow students to freely write their circumstances in their applications to better understand the various situations students find themselves in
 - Avoid being too specific in the application questions to predetermine what circumstances would qualify a student for financial aid during the crisis (this is one complaint we received about the application)
 - Attach a link to the form in a Ymessage message to all students and faculty, as well as include a link to the form in students’ My Financial Center

Section 5: Alternative Housing Options

| Question | | | |
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| Q 14. Should BYU require off-campus housing providers to provide accommodations for students with health needs, such as private rooms for those with compromised immune systems? | Yes |  | 168 |
| | No |  | 76 |
| Q 15. Should BYU establish official channels for high-risk students to obtain housing and other accommodations? | Yes |  | 202 |
| | No |  | 39 |

Recommendations:

- Require that BYU approved housing complexes offer optional alternative arrangements for private rooms at comparable rates for high-risk students
 - Provide and protect affordable housing/private rooms for high-risk students - earmark and preserve these spots just like a parking space
- Continue to require that complexes provide optional alternative housing arrangements for students that are exposed to or test positive for COVID-19.
 - Continue the current policy that complexes that fail to comply risk forfeiting BYU-Approved housing status.
- Communicate these rights to all students so that all students are aware of these special rights during the pandemic.
 - Via message to students
 - Via BYU housing portal
 - Via BYU's social media channels

Signed,
Your faithful students