

March 27, 2020

Dear Governor Ducey,

These are extreme times and I know there is a lot of pressure on those in politics, but I would like to draw your attention to a population that I believe lacks protection from those who would exploit them. Over the last twelve years I have been working to help those who have taken out payday loans and title loans. We have eliminated payday loans in Arizona, but many are still victimized by title loan companies with interest rates as high as 204% APR.

One woman that was sent in to our office by a church had two title loans. She paid for one year assuming she was paying down her loan and found out at the end of a year that she had paid almost all interest and little principle on her loan. We paid off her loan. The loans use cars and trucks as collateral for the loan. When a person gets too far behind the title company will confiscate the car and sell it. Another church I was working with had bought a refugee a car and paid cash for it. The African refugee borrowed \$1800 to help out his family, who were still in Africa. He was working for an elder care company at minimum wage and got behind on payments and the title company took the car. He had made \$800 in payments. The pastor called and asked me what to do. I told him to go with this refugee and ask the title company how much money they would require to release the car back to the refugee. They wanted \$3150 or they would sell the car. Then the refugee would not have transportation to work. We paid off the loan.

In the Old Testament lenders were not to take advantage of the needy, so loans could not be given that would hinder a person's ability to make a living. "It is wrong to take a pair of millstones, or even just the upper millstone, as a pledge (collateral), for the owner uses it to make a living (Deuteronomy 24:6). The ethics were all about not exploiting the poor or disadvantaged. I strongly believe that this is an oversight in our culture, a sin of ignorance or unethical behavior. The poor are being preyed upon by exploitive lending and it victimizes them and then effects the whole culture.

With the restrictions of social distancing to protect us from the Coronavirus many have lost their jobs. For the very poor this means they will also lose their vehicles -millstones. I strongly believe that title companies should not be able to take these borrowers cars or trucks during this time in our history or in my opinion any time. This population as well as those not being able to pay their rent should not be penalized for their limitations, especially during this time. Can you please help and put restrictions on the title companies as you have with landlords?

I have many from the faith community that would strongly agree with this position. They have read this letter and have agreed to lend their names and their churches name to it. Each is a pastor of a church, who feels that these title loan companies are exploiting our poor and perpetuating poverty in Arizona.

Thank you very much for reading this letter. I look forward to a response from you.

Sincerely

Randy Reynolds
Executive Director of Community Renewal-city pastor

Pastor Glen Elliott
Lead Pastor of Pantano Christian Church

Reverend Dan Johnson
Eastside Covenant Church

Pastor Philip Kruis
Senior Pastor of Rincon Mountain Presbyterian Church

Pastor Chris DeHaan
Senior Pastor of Vineyard Christian Community and city leader

Pastor David Drum
Executive Director of J17 Ministries – city pastor

Pastor Jim Roden
Lead Pastor of The Journey Church

Pastor Jim Toole
Pastor/Head of Staff of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Pastor Brett Inman
Executive Pastor of Ministry Christ Community Church

Pastor Bryan Lee
Lead Pastor of Elements City Church

Pastor Mark Wellman
Lead Pastor of University City Church

Dr Andrew Ross
Pastor/Head of Staff of Northminster Presbyterian Church

Mike Alameda
Executive Director of Corazon Ministries – one of the city pastors of the many Hispanic churches

Pastor Larry Munguia
Lead Pastor of S.O.B.E.R. Project – leader of those struggling with addiction

Pastor Jeff Markland
Senior Pastor of Good News Community Church – leader of those with addictions and homelessness

Pastor Pat McClanahan
Senior pastor of Fellowship Bible Church

Johanna Duffek
Concerned Resident of Tucson, AZ

P.S.

Every pastor I asked to look at this letter wanted to be a part of setting limits on the title loan companies. Yesterday one of the people that Community Renewal has helped to pay off one of his two loans asked if he could be late on his loan payment and the title company said they would come pick up and confiscate his car if he was late. To me this predatory lending is immoral and the severity of punishment for not making payments is unethical. I believe there are thousands of people of faith in Tucson who are against predatory lending and if you need me to get more signatures I will. We do not want to see the poor exploited and are giving voice to that thought. Thank you for hearing us. These are a few of the pastors and ministry leaders who read the letter and are committed to seeing limits on Title loans, especially in these hard times. Each confirmed their support through a phone call and an e-mail.