

January 23, 2019

Honorable Members of Housing Committee
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Cc: sharon.dickinson@lacity.org

Date: 1/23/19
Submitted in MSO Committee
Council File No: 14-0268-513
Item No.: 6
Deputy: Sum R. Lee

Dear Honorable Members Cedillo, Krekorian and Harris-Dawson,

Re: Anti-Tenant Harassment Ordinance - CF 14-0268-S13

Everyone has a right to feel safe and secure in his or her home. Harassment of tenants and their families by landlords and property managers undermines a basic freedom that many of us take for granted. We the undersigned organizations, write in strong support of the adoption of the Anti-Tenant Harassment Ordinance.

Harassment is a tool often used by unscrupulous landlords to circumvent Los Angeles' protective tenant laws and displace tenants. This ordinance will help to protect more tenants from displacement, which is an important part of addressing the housing and homelessness crises in our city. The phenomenon of harassment occurs in both RSO and non-RSO units, multi-family and single family residences. For that reason, we urge you to include all rental units in the City of Los Angeles for protection under the ordinance.

The proposed ordinance acknowledges the power imbalance between landlords and tenants, and provides the necessary framework for both deterrence and accountability for abuses. However, the present recommendation to define harassment as a list of behaviors is potentially inadequate. In spite of its many forms, the purpose of harassment is always to create fear. For that reason we urge you to include in the proposed ordinance "harassment" as defined in California Civil Code section 527.6(b)(3), which is "*a knowing and willful course of conduct directed at a specific person that seriously alarms, annoys, or harasses the person, and that serves no legitimate purpose.*"

Tenant harassment is a pervasive and unaddressed problem because state and federal laws provide little accountability, or no meaningful access for tenants to enforce their rights. For that reason, we urge you to prioritize meaningful enforcement mechanisms in this ordinance. These must include empowering low and middle-income tenants to bring a private civil action, by including a provision for the award of attorneys' fees and costs. We also urge you to increase funding for city agencies such as the Housing and Community Investment Department to oversee day-to day enforcement and community

education, and to introduce a robust Right to Counsel program to provide complementary eviction prevention services and legal services to promote dispute resolution.

As organizations that serve low and middle-income communities in Los Angeles, we hear horrifying stories of tenant harassment on a regular basis. We urge you to support this measure to bring much desperately needed relief to our communities.

Sincerely,

Los Angeles Center for Community Law and Action (LACCLA)

Inner City Law Center

Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU)

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE)

East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC)

Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)

Housing is a Human Right

Eviction Defense Network (EDN)

Anti-Eviction Mapping Project

Housing Equality and Advocacy Resource Team (HEART LA)

Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN)

Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)

People Organize for Westside Renewal (POWER)

Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED)

Long Beach Residents Empowered (LiBRE)

Union de Vecinos

InnerCity Struggle