

Communication from Public

Name: Hana Kommel, Staff Attorney at Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 04:35 PM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: On behalf of Bet Tzedek Legal Services, we write in strong support of a Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance. Bet Tzedek's Preventing and Ending Homelessness Project serves tenants throughout Los Angeles County and represents tenants in eviction cases in several courthouses within the County. Too often in our practice we have witnessed landlords intimidate tenants who are unaware of their rights, causing them to give up their apartments and run the risk of becoming homeless. We have seen landlords refuse to fix defective plumbing, forcing tenants to choose between unlivable conditions and homelessness. In one case, a landlord who had lost an earlier eviction lawsuit against a tenant resorted to intimidation as a way to get this LARSO-protected tenant to give up her apartment. His tactics included banging on her windows, verbally abusing her and her partner, and even staying the night without her consent. Even a restraining order against the landlord has not helped. In another case, the landlord illegally shut off the tenant's utilities and changed the locks, broke her air conditioner, removed the tenant's bed and her belongings, moved in another person in her stead, and constantly threatened the tenant and her daughter's lives. Ultimately, the landlord's illegal conduct forced the tenant to leave her unit. Tenants do not get the benefit of the court process when these illegal evictions take place. Now, in the era of COVID-19, we are trying to keep everyone housed because the stakes are so high. The pandemic has exacerbated the situation, but landlord harassment has always been a problem. Now is the time to put an end to this illegal practice. City Council must act now to pass a permanent Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance and make clear to landlords that they cannot use harassment and intimidation as a way around the legal eviction process.

Communication from Public

Name: John Parks

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 11:06 AM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: Good Morning Councilmembers, My name is John Parks and I am here representing the Coalition for Economic Survival and its members along with other tenant advocates in support of item #5. CES fully supports adoption and implementation of Item #5. Prior to the pandemic, systematic harassment was one of the gravest issues facing tenants at-risk of displacement. However this issue has only worsened during the pandemic. As state and local governments have issued multiple eviction moratoriums or rent increase suspensions, landlords are increasingly using extra-judicial strategies in order to force tenants out. Throughout this pandemic, tenants across the city have received false 3-day notices, exorbitant entries of workers who do not abide by health orders, and have the overall enjoyment of their homes taken away. While we thank the city councilmembers for their attention to this item, this can only be a first step to a fully funded and staffed implementation of the Anti-Tenant Harassment Ordinance within HCID. The resources must be made available for the housing department to investigate and penalize property owners who use harassment as a tool of displacement. Private attorneys are far too expensive for the most at-risk tenants who are already overburdened with decimated employment and accumulating rent. We strongly urge city council to adopt Item #5 and to continue to work toward a fully-funded and staffed implementation of the Anti-Tenant Harassment Ordinance in the future. Thank you.

Communication from Public

Name: Rob Reed

Date Submitted: 11/09/2020 05:00 PM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: I am writing in support of the adoption of the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, harassment has been the "silent evictor" of countless tenants of rent-controlled properties. As long as tenants lack specific and strong protections from harassment, landlords will continue to withdraw housing services, pound on tenants' doors day & night, threaten tenants with non-meritorious eviction actions, until they can no longer stand it, and give up their rent-controlled homes. Would you continue to live somewhere where the owner was "at war" with you? I strongly advocate that LA Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance have a "rent roll back provision" like the one contained in the City of West Hollywood's law. The goal of tenant harassment is to drive the tenant out to reset the rent to market rate. Without a rent roll back provision, the financial incentive for a landlord to harass remains. The threat of a future lawsuit where a tenant would merely have a money judgment on paper that must still be collected is no threat whatsoever. Only by negating the financial incentive will harassment be curbed.

Communication from Public

Name: Stephano Medina

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 03:58 PM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: Make sure it applies to all rental units in the City. Down the line we can do with public enforcement. Share a story. Harassment cases increased 325%. The Eviction Defense Network has seen an explosion of landlord harassment complaints over much of the past year, with our tally of cases increasing by 325%. Not only is this surge in landlord harassment a direct response to the postponements of judicial evictions, but we can also anticipate them to rise whenever the City acts to protect tenancies writ large. Simply put, if landlords cannot prevail against tenants legally, a growing number will be tempted to facilitate evictions through various forms of harassment that are **already** prohibited by State and local statutes. These landlords believe they can act with impunity because no specific statute exists to prohibit these forms of harassment and because they know too few low-income tenants will have access to legal representation. Every week, EDN sees tenants face threats of deportation, shutting off of utilities, and risk of personal violence. The proposed ordinance would provide tenants with a private right of action to put an end to illegal harassment. It must apply to all rental units across the city, not just those covered by the rent stabilization program. Understandably, current budgetary constraints limit the City's ability to increase its own public enforcement of this and other important tenant protections, but the inclusion of a private right of action - with meaningful penalties for landlord violations - ensures that a significant portion of tenants could obtain relief.

Communication from Public

Name: Lois DeArmond

Date Submitted: 11/12/2020 04:09 PM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: Honorable Housing Committee members; I write as a caseworker with the Los Angeles Tenants Union. I can tell you from personal experience, and from the experience of working with tenants in LA for the past 3 years (about how long this ordinance has been in the works), that it is urgent that the Ordinance be passed immediately, in its original form, not watered down, not called a "Program" rather than an Ordinance, and certainly NOT lacking any means of enforcement. Why would a miscreant landlord pay attention to anything as toothless as what is proposed today? Harassment is on the rise, getting worse daily, as more people fall behind in their rent due to Covid-19, and landlords resort to "self-help" evictions by harassment, intimidation, threats of violence, and illegal lock-outs. This s happening every day. People are suffering. Creating another cause of action whereby a tenant can sue a landlord is not the answer. As I am sure you are aware, it is extremely difficult for a tenant to find a lawyer who will take this kind of case. The worst landlord culprits are not corporate, deep pocket owners, but small time 1 or 2 building owners. This being the case, there would be no financial incentive for a lawyer to take such a case; no money=no lawsuit. On this note, the language of the law where it mentions prevailing party being awarded attorney's fees, the language must be "shall be awarded", rather than "may be awarded". "May be awarded..." guarantees no lawyer for the tenant. We must have a serious, strong ordinance, WITH ENFORCEMENT. Than you. Lois DeArmond

Communication from Public

Name: Jane Demian

Date Submitted: 11/12/2020 11:21 AM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: I am writing to the Housing Committee again to urge members to consider stronger enforcement measures for the Anti-Harassment Ordinance. Since the COVID crisis started, those of us who work with tenants are seeing a substantial increase in tenant harassment at the hands of landlords and their agents. Tenants have very little recourse without a strong Anti-Harassment Ordinance that enforces against harassment and punishes landlords for these tenant abuses. Tenants need access to attorneys to file a Private Right of Action lawsuit stopping the harassment, with subsequent protections for tenants so that they do not lose their housing. Tenants also need access to HCIDLA policies and personnel who can step into a dangerous situation to stop the harassment. Without a strong Anti-Harassment Ordinance tenants will be abused, harassed, followed by illegal lockouts and eventual homelessness.

Communication from Public

Name: Jake Crammer

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 09:28 AM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: I ask the City Council's Housing Committee to waive the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance (TAHO) out of Committee so it can be brought to the full City Council and approved as soon as possible. Before the pandemic hit, Los Angeles was already suffering from a displacement crisis where corporate landlords seeking ever-higher profits were pushing families out of their rent-stabilized homes and communities. Some landlords would use the legal system to evict tenants while others saved the attorneys' fees by directly harassing and intimidating renters out of their homes. In this way, legal evictions are only the tip of the displacement iceberg; for the landlord who wants only higher profits, direct harassment is often a cheaper and faster road to vacating a unit. My experience is that more tenants are displaced via harassment than the eviction process. And the consequences are dire: For renters who cannot find replacement affordable housing, displacement can mean living in cars, in shelters or on the street. There's nothing new about this but the pandemic is making things worse. Since the economic collapse triggered by the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of households are behind in their rent. In RSO buildings, renters with long-term tenancies and below-market rents are being targeted by corporate landlords. While City Council has passed important protections for limiting the grounds for legally evicting during the pandemic, the protections do not adequately address the non-legal ways that landlords push people out of their homes. Tenant advocacy groups like Inner City Law Center are seeing an increasing number of landlords who are taking the law into their own hands and locking people out of their homes without a court order. Several instances have been reported in the media. When landlords act in this way, renters have few protections and even fewer resources to address the problem. No City or County agency currently believes it has sufficient legal authority to protect tenants from landlord harassment. At best, a renter can file a complaint but typically, no action is taken to prevent the displacement. And the LAPD often ends up taking the side of the landlord, putting property above people. For more than three years now, tenants have called upon the City Council to pass a Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance. During the pandemic, the need has become even greater. Before any more families are pushed out of their homes, we ask you to

please act today to get the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance out of Housing and to the full City Council for consideration and approval.

Communication from Public

Name: Joshua Cantong

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 11:28 AM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: Hello all. My name is Joshua Cantong and I'm a graduate student at USC speaking on behalf of Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE) in strong support of the permanent tenant anti-harassment ordinance. We know that we have a housing crisis and an eviction crisis that's been exacerbated, greatly, by the pandemic; we also know that evictions are dire and lead to incredible hardship and instability for Angelenos who experience them; lastly, we know that evictions are most often preceded by harassment. The Eviction Defense Network has counted an increased magnitude in illegal lockouts from this same time last year, and we can't afford to wait any longer for a permanent means of protection for tenants who experience this form of abuse. We needed this ordinance—strong, durable, and enforceable—in pre-pandemic LA and now we need it to get us through the rest of the pandemic and to last us beyond the pandemic. Tenants shouldn't be put in situations where it is only they, without any protections or support from the city, standing between an RSO-unit owned landlord and their vacancy decontrol. Passing this ordinance is huge, and it'll be a victory for thousands of tenants who silently experience informal evictions in our city, without aid. Thank you so much for your time.

Communication from Public

Name: Curtis Skinner

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 01:57 PM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: Good afternoon; I'm Curtis Skinner, community economic development fellow with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. I'm making a general public comment in support of the tenant anti-harassment ordinance before the housing committee. This ordinance grew out of years of grassroots efforts to resist the daily harassment that many tenants experience across the city of Los Angeles. More recently, tenants have been organizing around the issue to defend themselves against unscrupulous landlords that have tried taking advantage of the confusion and fear around the COVID-19 pandemic to become even more aggressive in intimidating tenants. Any tenant who is effectively bullied out of their housing, during a pandemic no less, is one tenant too many. This is an emergency. State law in these cases is actually very limited. Harassment is only illegal in truly extreme cases, and even then a tenant has to prove that a landlord's intent was to actually drive them from their homes. Los Angeles needs to join other jurisdictions that have already moved to protect renters, and pass this ordinance. The county earlier today extended tenant protections that included an anti-harassment provision, and Long Beach just last week passed a tenant anti-harassment law. There is no reason why Los Angeles, a city of renters, should not be following suit. Tenants and advocates have been pleading with city leaders to get this ordinance adopted for years. And as many Angelenos are facing precarious housing and financial realities, the time to act is now. In the longer term, this ordinance will deter unfair and abusive practices against tenants and will also help level the playing field, thereby creating more housing stability for Los Angeles communities. Thank you for your time.

Communication from Public

Name: Kaitlyn Quackenbush

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 12:15 PM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: I work for a community based organization that supports tenants in South Los Angeles, SAJE. Every day we receive calls from tenants experiencing harassment from their landlord. These calls have increased since COVID19 and the shelter in place orders. The City Council and Council President to immediately pass the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance in order to protect tenants from harmful harassment that happens day-in and day-out to tens of thousands of tenants and ultimately leads to “silent” evictions that go unrecorded. Harassment has always been a problem. Covid-19 makes it worse, but we need this now and for it be permanent going forward. It affects tens of thousands of renters every day in Los Angeles. Before eviction often comes harassment. Almost everyone who has been evicted has first harassed. Harassment is the practice of wearing down the human spirit that drives families with no other place to live out of their homes despite the often inevitable consequence of homelessness. One of the primary motivations to harass rent control tenants is the incentive provided by “vacancy de-control”, when a landlord can raise the rent once the unit is empty. We must remove this incentive by enacting strong enforcement and penalties for any instances of harassment found to be caused by this profit motive. The most important differences between a proposed Permanent Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance and Los Angeles’ Temporary Covid-19 Tenant Protections are the scope and duration of their respective ordinances. A Permanent Tenant Anti-Harassment ordinance would protect tenants from a wide range of harassing behavior indefinitely. Conversely, the Temporary Covid-19 Protections only prohibit bad acts related to the current pandemic and those protections will eventually expire. These two ordinances are so different in scope and duration that the Temporary Covid-19 protections should not be considered a substitute for a Permanent Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance. The purpose of a Permanent Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance is to deter landlords from using harassment as a means to displace tenants. This is especially important in rent-controlled units where a landlord may be incentivized to displace a tenant and raise rent once the tenant leaves. Please pass this critical law and protect tenants across the City of Los Angeles.

Communication from Public

Name: Diana Cruz
Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 08:54 AM
Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: My name is Diana Cruz and I am a tenant in the city of Los Angeles and I am in support of the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance. My mother and I have undergone two no-fault evictions in the past decade in Koreatown. On both occasions, we were harassed and constantly pressured to leave. We were woken up to banging on our door on weekend mornings, loud and unnecessary construction prevented us from the quiet enjoyment of our unit, and we constantly received threatening calls and emails from our landlords. Now, I work as a paralegal for an eviction prevention and defense organization and have heard several tenant stories that echo what we experienced. From landlords removing services, making verbal threats, refusing to make repairs, to attempting to illegally evict and locking tenants out, tenant harassment is at an all-time high- especially now during COVID_19. I urge the City Council and Council President to immediately pass the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance in order to protect tenants from harmful harassment that happens day-in and day-out to tens of thousands of tenants and ultimately leads to unrecorded self-evictions. Almost every tenant that has been evicted has been a victim of harassment. This takes an emotional toll on families and eventually exhausts their capacity to withstand the daily harassment to the point that they are forced to vacate their unit despite not having another place to live. Under the RSO, once a unit is vacated landlords may raise the rent to market price, thus incentivizing landlords to harass and evict tenants. We must remove this incentive for all rental units in the City of LA by enacting strong enforcement and penalties for any instances of harassment. We cannot allow this housing crisis to grow worse. We must protect our neighbors and ensure that they are afforded the right to live peacefully in their homes and remain housed.

Communication from Public

Name:

Date Submitted: 11/10/2020 06:36 AM

Council File No: 14-0268-S13

Comments for Public Posting: I write to urge the Council to pass the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance in order to protect our city's tenants, and to keep families in their homes. The pandemic has exacerbated a long-existing problem, where landlords skirt and defy the law in order to force tenants out of their homes. The city must protect the laws the council itself has deemed necessary, by ensuring that tenants are not harassed outside of the law in order to nudge them onto the streets.