

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: I'm Curtis Skinner, community economic development fellow with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles. We strongly support item 27, the tenant anti-harassment ordinance. 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, unscrupulous landlords are taking advantage of the confusion and fear around COVID-19 to become even more aggressive in intimidating tenants. This is an emergency and it is time to provide tenants with this important tool. Los Angeles needs to join other jurisdictions that have already moved to protect renters, and pass this ordinance. Long Beach in November passed a strong anti-harassment measure, and Los Angeles County recently extended similar protections. This ordinance will deter unfair and abusive practices against tenants and will help level the playing field. As such, the city should pass as strong and robust of an anti-harassment ordinance as possible. However, we are concerned about the removal of a staff position at the city attorney's office, which was included in an earlier draft of the policy. HCID's May report stated that adoption of this ordinance will be ineffective without adequate enforcement. Therefore, we urge the city to pass an ordinance that includes city staffing. First, a city attorney to represent tenants would free tenants from needing to find the money or resources to hire a lawyer. Second, it's unclear exactly clear how the city's budget will be impacted, because HCID's proposal funded the attorney position entirely through a per-unit fee. Therefore, this ordinance would be budget neutral regardless of staff, yet would be much stronger with a city attorney supporting tenants. Thank you.