



January 22, 2019

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

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

Dear Honorable Members Cedillo, Krekorian and Harris-Dawson:

Castelblanco Law Group APLC has been serving the tenants of Los Angeles County with pride for over 20 years. We write in strong support the adoption of the Anti-Tenant Harassment Ordinance.

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.

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. Exempting non-RSO rental units from protection under the Ordinance would leave vulnerable populations of seniors, veterans and disabled tenants in Tax-Credit or covenant-restricted low-income housing open to abuse. 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*

Tel 213-388-6004
Fax 213-388-6090

10944 Ventura Boulevard
Studio City, CA 91604

www.castelblancolaw.com



Page 2

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. As a law firm that serves low and middle-income communities in Los Angeles, we hear horrifying stories of tenant harassment on a regular basis. We can attest personally to the inadequacy of existing remedies.

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.

We urge you to support this measure to bring much desperately needed relief to our communities.

Sincerely,

Eric E Castelblanco
Attorney at Law