

Communication from Public

Name: Sonia Suresh

Date Submitted: 03/02/2021 08:29 AM

Council File No: 21-0042

Comments for Public Posting: Nearly a year into the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of Angelenos are behind on rent and unsure how they're going to make future rent payments. The rent debt crisis is forcing tenants to make difficult choices between keeping a roof over their heads and paying for other necessities like food and healthcare. The only scaled solution to the rent debt crisis is regulatory action to forgive rent debt, along with using public dollars to set up a fund for landlords who are at risk of losing their properties. This is the only way to relieve the rent debt burden from every tenant who needs relief. SB 91 was not the policy that tenants and advocates wanted. It is a half-measure that will leave some tenants out. The SB 91 framework, which the City is going to implement through its new rental assistance program, does not adequately address the rent debt or ongoing rent obligations facing LA tenants. Under the SB 91 framework, landlords have near total control over the amount of rental assistance a tenant receives. If a tenant's landlord accepts the 80% deal, that tenant will get the remaining 20% of their arrears forgiven. But if a landlord, for whatever reason, refuses to accept the 80% deal, that tenant will only get 25% of their rent debt covered and still owe the rest beginning August 1st. We are deeply concerned that the tenants who will be left behind under this framework are the ones who need relief the most. Further, as designed, the program will use limited public dollars to line the pockets of corporate landlords who are not in need of assistance right now. As the City implements the SB 91 framework, we want to flag some specific concerns and recommendations. The City must ensure transparency and data with the program. HCID should regularly share data and metrics on the program with the public so we know where the program gaps are. We need to understand which landlords and tenants are getting assistance. The City should have the lowest documentation requirements for tenants to be eligible; self-certification should be sufficient to prove eligibility. The City should not place a \$10,000 cap on assistance. Not only would this be inconsistent with the language of SB 91, but we are concerned it could also undermine the goals of SB 91. A cap could mean that some tenants with the highest rent debts might not get all of their arrears covered. It could also mean that not all tenants will get prospective rent covered to protect them from eviction under SB 91. The City

should not arbitrarily set a cap on assistance. The City should not use another lottery system to distribute funds. A lottery means that tenants will face uncertainty for weeks while they wait for their names to be drawn. Instead, the City should consider another system that prioritizes the most vulnerable for assistance. The City should explore complementary policies to provide further security to tenants. For example, the City could refer any tenant whose landlord refused the 80% deal to StayHousedLA and other enforcement to identify/stop harassment. We urge you to work with advocates to craft complementary policies that will have the most impact. The Council should immediately pass and enforce the Anti-Tenant Harassment Ordinance and a codified right to counsel. The proposed funding for admin and outreach, including \$3 million for the Eviction Defense Program is a good start, but we should be taking the opportunity to make a more robust investment in eviction prevention, including funds for anti-harassment enforcement. Lastly, the City must partner with community organizations that are working directly with tenants to ensure tenants are able to apply and receive the maximum assistance. This round of rental assistance money will not likely be enough to cover all of the outstanding rent debt owed, and more money will be needed. Meanwhile, tenants will remain in a precarious situation. The only action that will provide relief immediately to all tenants is the cancellation of rent. The Council must cancel rent to ensure that tenants who have rent debt through no fault of their own come out of this pandemic debt-free. Thank you. Sonia Suresh

Communication from Public

Name: Gabriela Magana
Date Submitted: 03/02/2021 10:20 AM
Council File No: 21-0042

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Communication from Public

Name:

Date Submitted: 03/02/2021 10:40 AM

Council File No: 21-0042

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Communication from Public

Name: Kaitlyn Quackenbush

Date Submitted: 03/02/2021 12:38 PM

Council File No: 21-0042

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