



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
of St. Paul and Minneapolis

1200 Second Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55403
612-204-8500
cctwincities.org

June 5, 2020

City of Saint Paul
15 W. Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Saint Paul SAFE Ordinance Under Consideration (Ord 20-14)

Dear Mayor Carter and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

We write to you with gratitude for your leadership on the SAFE Housing Tenant ordinance under consideration by the City Council and to express our support of all provisions under consideration.

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis began its mission of serving those most in need 150 years ago in the heart of downtown Saint Paul. Our programs for children, families and adults annually help nearly 23,000 people, regardless of faith, background or circumstance. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community. We write to you today not only as a provider of essential services to our most vulnerable community members, but also as a property manager and landlord.

As you may know, we operate several housing sites within the City of Saint Paul across Wards 1, 2, and 4. These apartment buildings are permanent, supportive homes to 550 men and women who pay rent, contribute to the vibrancy of our community, and work every day towards greater housing stability. We also serve many Saint Paul residents through our scattered site program, working with clients to locate, secure and maintain apartments with individual landlords. This is in addition to the emergency shelter and daytime supportive services provided at Dorothy Day Place.

The City of Saint Paul is a majority-renter city with a tight housing market. Low inventory and vacancy rates across the city allow landlords to discriminate against anyone with a blemish on their record like less than favorable credit scores, criminal records and unlawful detainers, which disproportionately impact residents of color. These market barriers prevent those we serve from accessing safe, stable housing that they can afford. Passage of this ordinance is a racial equity issue and a critical step for housing justice.

Keeping tenants in their homes is critical to stabilizing the housing market and the health and well-being of renters, as has become more apparent with the COVID-19 pandemic. Stable housing allows tenants to put down roots in our community, pursue job and education opportunities and reduces the need for county services. The provisions within the SAFE ordinance support housing stability for our city's renters:

Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.

- **Tenant screening criteria reforms and a limit on security deposits** will help renters build assets and ensure that those eligible for housing are not denied a home for which they would otherwise qualify.
- **Just cause notice** creates more equity between landlords and renters by ensuring a tenant cannot be evicted without a specified and just reason. This also gives tenants piece of mind and allows for long-term planning, which supports stability.
- **A required 90-day advance notice of sale** to the city for certain multi-family buildings would create opportunities in the market for non-profit affordable housing developers to intervene and maintain the existing stock of affordable homes within the city. This notice would guarantee a protection period and/or relocation assistance to tenants who may otherwise be displaced in the sale.
- **Tenant rights and responsibilities information** is a common-sense step that will improve relationships between landlords and tenants. The rights and responsibilities of both tenants and the City will be clear, allowing tenants to assert their rights if necessary and locate resources in the community to settle disputes.

We were in a housing crisis before COVID-19 took hold, and the pandemic has only exacerbated the problem, shedding a glaring light on the inequities within our housing system. Passing this ordinance today will help preserve our limited supply of affordable housing, keep people stably housed and save lives. Thank you for your continued leadership for housing justice in our city.

Sincerely,



Wendy Underwood
Vice President, Social Justice Advocacy & Engagement
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis