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From: sarah.a.hunt@everyactionadvocacy.com <sarah.a.hunt@everyactionadvocacy.com>

Sent: Monday, June 7, 2021 12:39 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward3 <Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Renters Belong in St. Paul! Don't Repeal the SAFE Housing Tenant Protections Ordinance

Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.

Dear Council Member Chris Tolbert,

I'm writing to strongly oppose the repeal of the SAFE Housing tenant protections ordinance (Ord 21:21: Chapter 193 of the Legislative Code related to Tenant Protection). I'm a homeowner in Highland Park because I hold race and class privilege. As a homeowner, I have stable "rent," can control the quality of my home, and have agency over what happens to my home; I don't share the pressures faced by renters. Thus it feels extra important to write to you and express my opposition to the repeal of the SAFE Housing tenant protections ordinance, which represents a first step in creating a more just housing system in St. Paul.

As you know, the majority of St. Paul residents are renters. The numbers are especially high for households of color; according to the American Community Survey in 2019, 82% of Black residents in St. Paul rent their homes, as do 64% of Native American residents, 62% of Latino residents, and 58% of Asian residents. This is one reason why, as community leaders have known and expressed for decades, protections for renters are unequivocally an issue of racial justice.

In Judge Magnuson's preliminary injunction order, he asserts that "concern [about racial disparities] is addressed by the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits race-based housing discrimination." This statement presents a dangerously limited conception of how institutional racism works to destabilize housing for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in our city. Any decision the City Council makes on this issue - whether to protect renters' rights or leave them to fend for themselves - will be disproportionately felt by communities of color, especially Black households; to ignore that fact is deeply disingenuous and abandons St. Paul's BIPOC renters.

In passing this ordinance, the City Council took a bold step in the right direction - but St. Paul residents were also promised this was only the first step on a longer journey toward housing equity for everyone in our city. Instead, the City Council is prepared to take a step backwards, to betray over half the city's residents under pressure from predatory corporate landlords. The protections offered by this ordinance have countless precedents across the nation. This piece of legislation, while deeply meaningful to renters in St. Paul, is not outlandish or revolutionary. It is a slate of proven, court-tested, common-sense protections that lay the groundwork for renters to put down roots and flourish in our communities.

These communities are worth fighting for. As Council Member Jalali said in the first reading of the effort to repeal this ordinance, "None of us can back down from our responsibility to continue fighting for renters in any avenue, even as that battle presents new fronts."

A vote to repeal the SAFE Housing ordinance is abandoning our city's renters at this pivotal moment. Don't be bullied by corporate and predatory landlords who will oppose and litigate any protections for tenants. Oppose the repeal of the ordinance, and help ensure that St. Paul lives up to its name as "the most livable city in America".

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Sarah Hunt

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