

June 17, 2020

Re: S.A.F.E. Housing Tenant Protections



Dear City Councilmembers:

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of the Southeast Community Organization/District 1 Community Council in support of the proposed S.A.F.E. Ordinances by the City of Saint Paul. Our organization's Land Use Committee has been carefully considering these ordinances for months. At our June meeting, the committee voted to support the ordinance, including the just cause provisions, as currently proposed.

Outreach and involvement with renters are a core part of our work and values, and is a goal in our strategic plan. In recent years, we have intentionally engaged renters in our activities via educational sessions, renter cookouts, 1-1 meetings and committees. This outreach has taken a great deal of time and relationship-building and we will continue to see it as critical.

In our office, located at the Sun Ray Shopping Center, we have regular visits from community members asking for help, and sharing horror stories of treatment by landlords. Key issues include unjust evictions, rising rents, excessive fees being asked of renters such as an "administrative fee" in addition to a deposit, or a requirement of 6-months' rent in advance of a lease, providing a tenant only 30 days to find a new home, lack of repairs which sometimes endanger renters lives, and more. We cannot stand by and let this continue.

Staff of the Southeast Community Organization have participated in meetings hosted by the East Side Housing Justice group at the East Side Freedom Library and we stand with them as an ally. In addition, we have been an active participant in the Housing Equity Now St. Paul coalition made up of organizations that include The Alliance, the West Side Community Organization, MICAH, the Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Jewish Community Action and the Housing Justice Center. It is more important than ever to grasp the connection between housing injustice and our black and brown residents. The ordinances are one small step in building systemic changes in tenant/landlord practices that build toward racial justice.

We request that this letter be included in materials for consideration at upcoming discussions and hearings.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul Sawyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

Paul Sawyer

Land Use Committee Chair, on behalf of the Board of Directors