

*Joseph A Raso*

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Honorable Mayor & City Council

April 22, 2024

I regret that circumstances prevent my physical presence at the upcoming Council Meeting on 04/23/24. Our family is getting together for my wife's birthday. However, I am compelled to address the pressing issue at hand regarding the urgent need for modifications to the "Tenant Protection Ordinance" (TPO) in our city.

The financial ramifications of the current ordinance cannot be overstated. It has brought about significant harm to renters and exacerbated the challenges faced by our homeless population. As a member of this community for 75 years, I never imagined witnessing such distress caused by the actions of our City Council.

The flaws within the TPO, particularly the provision granting staff the authority to impose exorbitant daily fines for minor errors on required forms, are deeply concerning. Clause 9.65.080C2's allowance of fines up to \$5,000 per violation per day is excessive and unjust. This punitive approach has a ripple effect, leading to increased financial burdens on both tenants and landlords.

The situation is further exacerbated by the average monthly rent of \$3,047, rendering housing unaffordable for many residents. This untenable situation contributes to the escalating homelessness crisis in our community. Instead of offering protection, the current TPO forces landlords to raise rents to offset the risk of facing astronomical fines, creating a cycle of hardship for vulnerable renters.

I urge the City Council to take immediate action to rectify these issues. A simple amendment requiring a notice to cure before issuing fines would mitigate unjust penalties and provide an opportunity for corrective action. This approach aligns with the intent of the TPO to protect tenants without unfairly burdening landlords.

Importantly, state law does not prohibit the issuance of warnings for non-compliance. A warning system would prompt the vast majority of well-intentioned tenants and landlords to rectify issues promptly, while identifying and penalizing any bad actors more efficiently.

It is within the Council's power to address these concerns promptly and prevent further financial harm to our community members. I implore you to prioritize this matter, fulfill your duty to represent the welfare of constituents by enacting necessary modifications to the TPO. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

*Joseph A Raso*