

January 31, 2022

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Regina Celestin Williams
Executive Director

Mayor Burt and Councilmembers
City of Palo Alto
250 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Dear Mayor Burt, Vice Mayor Kou, and Councilmembers Cormack, Filseth, DuBois, Stone, and Tanaka:

RE: Item 3 – Amendment to the Relocation Assistance for No-Fault Evictions Ordinance

On behalf of Silicon Valley at Home and our members, we write today to express our support for the staff recommendation to adopt both an emergency ordinance and a permanent ordinance lowering the units per property threshold for tenant relocation assistance for No-Fault Evictions. There are members of this community that you can protect from a current threat of displacement by adopting both ordinances, maintaining stability for your neighbors and the communities in which they live.

The costs incurred by households forced to move from their homes are significant and those with limited means of absorbing these costs face displacement and hardship, as this council acknowledged in passing the original relocation ordinance in 2018, and as staff articulated in the Findings and Declarations for these two ordinances. While we recognize that the action taken by this Council on November 29 of last year directed staff to return only with a permanent ordinance, staff has outlined compelling reasons to support the emergency ordinance at this time because of identified tenants in properties that are facing threats of no-fault evictions today. Given the clear intent of this council to provide additional protections for these households, the risk of the City's current community members losing their homes prior to the permanent ordinance in March justifies the proposed urgency ordinance making these protections immediate.

The use of urgency ordinances to make policy is not always good practice, but the power of your Council to pass such an ordinance exists for cases just like this. We advocated for a similar urgency ordinance in 2018 when the residents of the President Hotel faced eviction without adequate relocation support. We also advocated for local urgency ordinances during the implementation of AB 1482, noting that the period between the adoption of new tenant protections and their implementation was perhaps the most dangerous period for the most vulnerable households as some landlords would be compelled to take actions counter to the intent of the new rules in the period just before their implementation. While we do not know the full intent or motivation of the property owner(s) pursuing or threatening, no-fault evictions at this time, it is common for local action to pre-empt such actions taking place just ahead of new protections, lest the council policy deliberations themselves become the precipitating event for additional hardship.

Palo Alto is a wonderfully desirable place to live, but it is also a place where many long-term residents, central to the stability of your community, often struggle to remain. The research presented to you over these last months and our experience working in your city clearly

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shows that these challenges are particularly acute for lower-income households and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities in Palo Alto. Your actions in November to prioritize and move forward with a package of tenant protection ordinances were a strong statement of your continuing support for stable communities, and we recognize it as a model for neighboring jurisdictions.

As we work collectively to refine and finalize the other ordinances you have endorsed, we urge you to take immediate action today in passing the urgency ordinance as well as the permanent ordinance extending relocation assistance to protect more of your community members at-risk of displacement today.

Sincerely,



Regina Celestin Williams
Executive Director, SV@Home