

Press Release

March 3, 2016

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Oakland Renters, Homeowners, City workers, and Clergy File Anti-Displacement Housing Initiative Offering Stronger Tenant Protections for Oakland Families

WHAT: Ballot Initiative To Be Filed in Oakland City Hall Followed by Press Conference
WHEN: 11:30AM, March 3 Press Conference
12Noon Ballot Filing
WHERE: In front of Oakland City Hall
WHO: Community and Labor Coalition organizations

OAKLAND— A large coalition of Oakland renters, clergy, teachers, homeowners, unions, community organizations, small business, and landlords are filing a proposed anti-displacement ballot initiative that strengthens fair and equitable protections for Oakland tenants most impacted by the City's growing housing crisis.

Oakland's "Renters Upgrade" initiative is being filed March 3 at Oakland City Hall, as a number of Bay Area cities including Richmond, Alameda, San Mateo and San Jose also prepare to file and introduce their own initiatives and ordinances to help lift up tenants from across the region. If approved by voters, Oakland's "Renters Upgrade" would expand Oakland's current "Just Cause for Eviction" law and provide greater ability for the city to enforce existing laws amidst a wave of unfair evictions and widespread harassment as the demand for housing in Oakland grows.

The Renters Upgrade would:

- Expand eviction protections to almost 45% more Oakland renters by making those protections apply to units built after 1983 and 1995.
- Establish a 5% rent cap – half of the current rent cap (10%)
- Establish a rent stabilization board with the majority of members comprised of current tenants
- Require improved tracking and a publically accessible database for all rent increases to ensure increased internal city communication with the various departments in charge of housing; and
- Require that the City prioritize resources for the enforcement of all protections as well as to program implementation of the Tenant Protection Ordinance.

“On behalf of Oakland tenants who have struggled for over 30 years with a landlord written ordinance, this is a proud day to finally look forward to a measure that will ensure justice and fairness,” says James Vann of the Oakland Tenants Union.

“Finding quality, affordable housing is a problem for everyone, including teachers, janitors, city workers, all working families,” says Paula Beal, Oakland renter. “I am a renter, a senior citizen and a grandmother and I am personally affected by the issues addressed in this initiative, I have been displaced multiple times in the last several years because I am not protected by our City's current tenant laws. The Renters Upgrade is a common sense initiative that would help me and other long-time renters, elders, youth, and working families stay in our homes and near our communities.”

“I’ve been an Oakland homeowner for over 35 years. We saw the foreclosure crisis displace thousands of homeowners from this city and now we’re seeing this recent housing boom make it difficult for renters, who make up 60% of Oakland’s population, to remain here. Its not fair, it’s not what Oakland is about and it’s time we as a community, work towards a solution,” says Shirley Burnell, West Oakland homeowner and lifelong Oakland resident.

This broad coalition which includes city workers, homeowners, small landlords, clergy who have lost scores of congregants to the housing crisis, nurses, teachers, and tenants are united in a desire to stop rising rents and displacement disrupting the lives of thousands of working class people and Black families in Oakland.

Coalition Members Include:

Alliance of California for Community Empowerment Action

California Nurses Association

Causa Justa :: Just Cause

East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy

Oakland Community Organizations

Oakland Rising

Oakland Tenants Union

SEIU Local 1021

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