

MOTION

As rents of market-rate apartments have soared, Angelenos living in rent-stabilized units have increasingly become targets of harassment in order to create vacancies and set rents at market rate. Data also reveals that families and people of color were far more likely to experience harassment. For example, a study by USC Price found notable variance in the rate of tenant harassment along racial lines, with 45% of Asian American and Black tenants reporting harassment and 49% of Latino tenants reporting harassment as compared to 29% of White tenants. Further, according to a University of Pennsylvania survey of tenants who applied for the City's 2020 Emergency Rental Assistance Program, 51% of households with at least one child under eighteen had experienced landlord harassment.

The City's proposed Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance is meant to protect tenants from this sort of mistreatment. To ensure that the Ordinance fulfills its intended purpose to protect vulnerable tenants, the City will need data on the types of cases brought under the Ordinance and which tenants are able to make use of its protections. Once this data is collected, the City will be able to determine which tenants may need further protection.

To ensure that vulnerable tenants have access to the full extent of their legal rights while also insulating mom-and-pop landlords from unfounded lawsuits, the City should also explore implementing its own tenant anti-harassment enforcement program. Neighboring cities have instituted these programs to protect and enforce against tenant harassment where private causes of actions have fallen short to prevent it. The Santa Monica City Attorney's Office, for example, has a special unit dedicated to investigating and pursuing tenant harassment cases. The City itself has explored the possibility of employing dedicated City staff to enforce a tenant anti-harassment ordinance in a December 2018 Housing and Community Investment Department (HCID) report (CF 14-0268-S13). The City should once again consider this approach, among others, in order to ensure that tenants are fully protected from harassment in the City of Los Angeles.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Housing and Community Investment Department (HCID), with the assistance of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), and the City Attorney, to report back after the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance has been in effect for June 23, 2022 with data and metrics the Council may utilize to assess the effectiveness of the Ordinance.

The report should include, among any other relevant factors:

- The number of cases filed by private attorneys that include the Ordinance as a cause of action;
- The number of cases filed by the City Attorney that include the Ordinance as a cause of action;


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- The number of criminal cases filed by the City Attorney related to the Ordinance;
- The number of cases brought under the Ordinance in which judges have awarded attorneys' fees to prevailing tenants;
- The number of complaints made to HCID regarding landlord harassment (via phone calls, online forms, or any other intake mechanism); and
- The demographics (including race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, income level, disability status, family status, and membership in other relevant protected classes) of tenants who lodge complaints with HCID regarding landlord harassment and tenants who file cases under the Ordinance.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the CLA, with the assistance of HCID, to report back concurrently to Council with a comparative analysis of other California cities' protocols and programs for enforcing tenant anti-harassment ordinances. This analysis should include a review of enforcement programs in San Francisco and Santa Monica, among any other relevant comparator cities.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct HCID and the City Attorney, with the assistance of the CAO, building upon the December 2018 HCID report, to report back concurrently on a recommended tenant anti-harassment program for the City of Los Angeles, including the resources necessary to create permanent City staff positions to monitor and enforce the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance.

PRESENTED BY:


 NITHYA RAMAN
 Councilmember, 4th District

SECONDED BY:



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