



CITY COUNCILMEMBER
RIGEL ROBINSON
 DISTRICT 7

CONSENT CALENDAR
 May 28, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson
 Subject: Support for Renters Rights Bills: SB 529, and AB 36, 724, 1481, and 1482

RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter supporting SB 529, and AB 36, 724, 1481, and 1482 to their respective authors, which would strengthen tenant organizing rights, allow rent control on certain units, provide caps for annual rent increases, protect against wrongful evictions, and create a registry of all California rental units.

BACKGROUND

Recently, State Senator Maria Durazo and Assemblymembers Richard Bloom, Buffy Wicks, Rob Bonta, and David Chiu introduced five items which together constitute a package aimed at strengthening tenant protections in California.

SB-529 (Durazo) establishes a right to organize, so that tenants can form tenants associations and speak out without fear of eviction or other retaliation. This bill strengthens existing protections by requiring landlords to state the reason for eviction.

In California, the 1995 Costa Hawkins Rental Housing Act limits the ability of city governments to control rent and rental restrictions. AB 36 (Bloom) will change current state law, softening the restrictions applied by Costa-Hawkins and allowing cities to pursue rent control measures on specific buildings.

AB-724 (Wicks) addresses the lack of any statewide registry on rental units. Currently, California has no system for requiring landlords to report how many units they own, and how much rent they charge. This leaves the responsibility of collecting this information to city officials, and leaves unincorporated areas without any rental reporting oversight. AB-724 would address these issues by legally requiring landlords to report this information to the state, giving the state data on rent hikes and tenant displacement, both in areas where local authorities do not share their information with the state and in unincorporated areas without rent boards.

AB-1481 (Bonta) would enact just-cause eviction protections throughout the state of California.

AB-1482 (Chiu) would set a statewide cap on annual rental increases, helping mitigate the effects of rising rents on tenants. According to Assemblymember Chiu, the bill's

author, “millions of Californians are just one rent increase away from becoming homeless.”

Together, this package of five bills would enable a much wider swath of renters’ protections.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, (510) 981-7170
Josh Lewis, Mars Svec-Burdick and Ronit Sholkoff, Interns to Councilmember Rigel Robinson

Attachments:

- 1: Letters to Senator Durazo, Assemblymember Wicks, Assemblymember Bloom, Assemblymember Bonta, Assemblymember Chiu
- 2: Bill Text: SB-529
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB529
- 3: Bill Text: AB-36
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB36
- 4: Bill Text: AB-724
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB724
- 5: Bill Text: AB-1481
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1481
- 6: Bill Text: AB-1482
http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1482

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5066
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 529, Durazo, Right to Organize/Protect Tenant Voices
Support from the Berkeley City Council**

Dear Senator Durazo:

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey support for your bill SB 529, which seeks to protect tenants' right to organize without fear of retaliation.

As you are aware, the shortage of affordable housing in the Bay Area and statewide has reached the level of a crisis. In order to protect California tenants and take step towards solving systemic housing issues, it is crucial for tenants to retain the ability to form associations and engage in collective bargaining.

Under current law, landlords may evict tenants without listing a cause, leaving an opportunity for unlawful, retaliatory evictions to take place. By seeking to close this loophole, your bill would ensure a greater level of accountability on the part of landowners, and help to promote a more equitable dynamic between owners and renters.

Ultimately, SB 529 seeks to remove the barriers to participation in California tenant associations, and thereby is an important step towards a fairer statewide housing market.

Thank you for introducing this important piece of legislation, and striving to uphold tenant organizing rights.

Respectfully,
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner
Assembly Member Buffy Wicks

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Member of the Senate
State Capitol, Room 5160
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 724 (Wicks)
Support from the Berkeley City Council

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey its full support for your bill AB 724, which addresses the lack of any statewide registry on rental units.

As you are aware, the shortage of affordable housing in the Bay Area and statewide has reached the level of a crisis. In order to protect California tenants and take step towards solving systemic housing issues, a greater level of transparency and data from the rental industry is needed.

Currently, California has no system for requiring landlords to report how many units they own, and how much rent they charge. This leaves the responsibility of collecting this information to city officials, and leaves unincorporated areas without any rental reporting oversight. By legally requiring landlords to report this information to the state, your bill would increase public understanding of rent hikes and tenant displacement, helping local and state organizations identify and mitigate concerning trends.

As proposed, your bill will empower state and local governments to be more effective in protecting renters, and thereby is an important step towards a fairer statewide housing market.

Thank you for introducing this important piece of legislation, and striving to help make the necessary reforms to mitigate the housing crisis.

Respectfully,
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Member of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 36 (Bloom)
Support from the Berkeley City Council

Dear Assemblymember Bloom,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey its full support for your bill AB 36, which relaxes Costa-Hawkins restrictions on local rent control measures.

As you are aware, the shortage of affordable housing in the Bay Area and statewide has reached the level of a crisis. In order to protect California tenants and take step towards solving systemic housing issues, it is necessary for local governments to have greater autonomy when considering mitigation of rent hikes.

Under current law, the 1995 Costa Hawkins Rental Housing Act limits the ability of city governments to control rent and rental restrictions. By softening Costa-Hawkins restrictions and allowing cities to pursue rent control measures on specific buildings, AB 36 would increase the ability of municipalities to respond more flexibly to the ongoing crisis of affordable housing.

Thank you for introducing AB-36, and striving to help cities and local governments mitigate rising rents and be more effective in protecting renters.

Respectfully,
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner
Assembly Member Buffy Wicks

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Rob Bonta
Member of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2148
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1481 (Bonta)
Support from the Berkeley City Council

Dear Assemblymember Bonta,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey its full support for your bill AB 1481, which strives to guard against wrongful evictions by enacting a statewide just cause for evictions law.

As you are aware, the shortage of affordable housing in the Bay Area and statewide has reached the level of a crisis. In order to protect California tenants and take step towards solving systemic housing issues, it is necessary to enact just-cause eviction protections throughout the state of California.

While the City of Berkeley already has a strong just cause eviction program, it is imperative that similar protections be spread to the rest of the renters of the state. Security in housing is essential for basic human fulfillment, and requiring a legitimate reason for eviction is a common sense measure that will vastly improve the lives of literally millions of people in California.

Thank you for introducing AB-1481. As proposed, this bill will instate critical reforms protecting renters and striving to help mitigate the housing crisis.

Respectfully,
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner
Assembly Member Buffy Wicks

May 6, 2019

The Honorable David Chiu
Member of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room 4112
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1482 (Chiu)
Support from the Berkeley City Council

Dear Assemblymember Chiu,

The Berkeley City Council would like to convey its full support for your bill AB 1482, which strives to mitigate rent hikes.

As you are aware, the shortage of affordable housing in the Bay Area and statewide has reached the level of a crisis. In order to protect California tenants and take step towards solving systemic housing issues, it is critical to initiate a state anti-rent gouging ordinance.

By prohibiting any annual change in rental cost which exceeds 5% plus the percentage change in the cost of living, AB 1482 ensures that no resident experiences consecutive or significant rent hikes at a level which effectively forces their relocation, and protects low income residents who may be one rent hike away from experiencing homelessness. Housing is a human right, and renters should have a greater degree of security against financial displacement.

As proposed, this bill will instate critical reforms to more effectively in protect renters and mitigate rising rents.

Respectfully,
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner
Assembly Member Buffy Wicks

