

RESOLUTION 15-02

AUTHORIZATION TO PASS THROUGH TO CERTAIN TENANTS A PORTION OF FISCAL YEAR 2016 REGISTRATION FEE AS A TEMPORARY GENERAL ADJUSTMENT OF RENT CEILINGS AND HAVE STAFF IMPLEMENT A MECHANISM THAT ALLOWS QUALIFYING LOW-INCOME TENANTS TO BE REIMBURSED FOR ANY PASS-THROUGH

BE IT RESOLVED by the Rent Stabilization Board of the City of Berkeley as follows:

WHEREAS, the Rent Stabilization Board operates on the basis of a fiscal year and each year adopts an operational budget after public review and input; and

WHEREAS, Section 123 of Article XVII of the Charter of the City of Berkeley provides that the Rent Stabilization Board shall finance its reasonable expenses by charging landlords annual registration fees in amounts deemed reasonable by the Board; and,

WHEREAS, the Executive Director and Rent Stabilization Board believe that recurring annual revenues of \$4,285,000 in FY 2016 will be necessary to meet the Program's operating needs and it will require an annual registration fee of \$213 per unit; and,

WHEREAS, Sections 6.N and 8.K of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance authorize the Rent Board to approve passing a portion of annual registration fees along to tenants as a rent adjustment; and,

WHEREAS, prior to the voters changing the way in which the Annual General Adjustment (AGA) was calculated effective in 2005, the Board passed along to tenants all increases in the registration fees as one of the components of the AGA; and,

WHEREAS, with the voter approved change in how the AGA is calculated, the Board is no longer allowed to include new increases to the registration fee as part of the AGA, but only as a pass-through adopted and extended each year; and,

WHEREAS, since 2005, the Rent Stabilization Board found that it would be fair and equitable in view of the purposes of the Rent Ordinance to pass along to tenants part or all of the increase in the registration fee as a temporary adjustment of rent ceilings; and,

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WHEREAS, under vacancy decontrol, owners are expected to take into account past and anticipated future operating cost increases when setting the initial rent for a new tenancy and therefore, increases to the registration fee presumably have been factored into the rent charged; and,

WHEREAS, approximately 15% of the rental units in the City have a tenancy that began prior to January 1, 1999, when vacancy decontrol was fully implemented; and,

WHEREAS, the Board has attempted to guarantee that owners of these units continue to receive a pass-through for increased costs to the registration fee; and,

WHEREAS, the Rent Stabilization Board finds that it would be fair and equitable in view of the purposes of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance to continue to pass along to certain tenants a portion of the 2016 registration fee as temporary adjustments of rent ceilings; and,

WHEREAS, the Board also understands and wishes to mitigate the financial hardships experienced by tenants living at 40% or less of Area Median Income (AMI) or otherwise receiving certain forms of income qualifying assistance, who have to pay the pass-through; and,

WHEREAS, the Board has unclaimed overcharge money available in the AEPHI Lawsuit Settlement Fund designated under Regulation 1271(B) for programs that benefit low- and/or moderate-income tenants.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that for each rental unit in which the tenancy began prior to January 1, 1999, for which a full registration fee is paid for Fiscal Year 2016, the landlord may, by serving legal notice pursuant California Civil Code section 827, increase the rent by up to \$6.00 a month for twelve consecutive months, provided, however, that this partial registration fee pass-through shall not be considered part of the permanent rent ceiling for purposes of calculating the 2016 Annual General Adjustment; and,

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this twelve month temporary general adjustment of up to \$6.00 may not be imposed prior to July 1, 2015 and, regardless of when first collected, shall terminate no later than December 31, 2016, unless extended by further Board action; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the maximum increase shall not result in a pass-through greater than \$6.00 per month, and notice to tenants of any pass-through shall be on a form provided by the Board or use language approved by the Executive Director; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the landlord shall be required to submit a copy of the above-referenced form to the Rent Board before collecting the pass-through; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board instructs the Director to implement a program that reimburses low-income tenants with a household income at 40% or less of AMI or otherwise demonstrating proof of qualification in another state or federal program (including, but not limited to: CalWORKS, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, WIC) approved by the Director for any pass-through they incur provided by Regulation 1271(B) which allows for distribution of unclaimed funds to benefit low-income tenants.

Dated: May 11, 2015

Adopted by the Rent Stabilization Board of the City of Berkeley by the following vote:

Yes: Chang, Dodsworth, Harr, Selawsky, Shelton

No: Soto-Vigil

Abstain: Hunt, Townley

Absent: Laverde

Jesse Townley, Chairperson
Rent Stabilization Board

Attest: _____
Jay Kelekian, Executive Director