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Meeka D. Owens
Cincinnati City Council

June 13, 2023

MOTION

“Tenants Bill of Rights” - Protecting Renters through City Financial Incentives

As part of the ongoing efforts to expand renter protections through the Cincinnati Tenants Bill of Rights, **WE MOVE** for the City of Cincinnati Administration to provide a report that assesses the administrative feasibility of implementing additional renter protections through the City’s available development incentives, including the Residential and / or Property Tax Abatement Program; Notice of Funding Availability Program; the Fund of Funds administered by the Cincinnati Development Fund; and any other forces of City influence that are permissible under O.R.C. 5321.19.

The following protections should be addressed in the report, as well as any others identified by the Administration:

- Limiting rent increases for residential real property over a twelve-month period
- Just / Good Cause for Eviction
- Relocation services and fees
- Fee limitations, including for pets, late rent, renter applications, and other fees associated with renting
- Increase the time for notice for a rent increase
- Full compliance with the City’s rental registry requirements
- Regulate the term of a lease to require an offer of a year-long lease unless the tenant requests otherwise

WE FURTHER MOVE that the report consider whether landlords may act in bad faith and pass on potential auxiliary fees or other costs onto their renters, and recommend ways in which this can be counteracted through city incentives.

WE FURTHER MOVE that this report should be submitted to Council within ninety (90) days of this motion’s passage.

Councilmember Meeka D. Owens

Councilmember Seth Walsh

STATEMENT

Many Cincinnati residents have been subjected to landlords suddenly seeking an increase in rent, and then been forced to seek new housing in a short amount of time. In June 2022, the State of Ohio passed a natural gas line regulation measure that additionally blocked Ohio cities from implementing regulations on rent increases.¹ However, the law still included a carveout so that cities are not preempted from imposing regulations that are tied to voluntary incentives, including federal and state incentives, tax abatements, tax credit financing, bond or other financing, or loans or grants from the political subdivision.²

The benefits and incentivizes that the City provides for development are pivotal to increasing and preserving the available housing supply at all levels. However, we should also be considering ways that these incentives can be leveraged to offer the maximum possible protections for the tenants who live within those developments.

¹ O.R.C. 5321.01(O) defines rent control as “requiring below-market rents for residential premises or controlling rental rates for residential premises in any manner, including by prohibiting rent increases, regulating rental rate changes between tenancies, limiting rental rate increases, regulating the rental rates of residential premises based on income or wealth of tenants, and other forms of restraints or limitation of rental rates.” In addition, O.R.C. 5321.01(P) defines rent stabilization as “allowing rent increases for residential premises of a fixed amount or on a fixed schedule as set by a political subdivision.”

² See O.R.C. 5321.19(B)(3).