



October 15, 2019

Statement to City Council during Public Comment

Mayor Obringer & Council-Members,

We come before you tonight to help redirect a critical conversation. Last month there was much debate on Facebook and during public comment about how appropriate or inappropriate it was for residents and tenants to express anger at the Mayor during her coffee hour. But very little mention was made of WHY tenants are angry.

We ask you what emotion they should feel when they and their families are kicked out of their apartment for asking for a repair? Or for reporting bedbugs to the landlord repeatedly, with no result? Or dealing with the shock of getting an 89% rent increase? Or when the landlord doesn't return their security deposit even when there is no damage?

How should residents feel when they have been coming to City Council for four years asking for relief, only to find constant delays and empty gestures?

In 2016, the Council commissioned a six-month Study Session on the issue of Concord's rental housing affordability crisis. No meaningful solutions emerged from that process, even after countless testimonies from families being displaced or burdened by skyrocketing rents.

In the summer of 2018, we brought you a detailed report and survey of almost 1,000 residents, which showed that 75% of residents feared unjust eviction, almost 50% experienced unresolved pest problems, and 40% were dealing with hazardous mold in their unit.

In the fall of 2018, 29 families were evicted from Parkside Garden Apartments when an investment firm from outside of Concord bought it and pushed out all the long-time working class residents who called it home.

Finally, in January of this year, the Mayor established an Ad Hoc committee tasked with bringing back proposals related to protecting tenants from egregious rent increases and unjust evictions. That committee finished its work in June. Councilmembers Hoffmeister, McGallian and Mayor Obringer completely dismissed all proposals from their colleagues on the Council to consider meaningful solutions that came out of the Ad Hoc committee. At that meeting on June 19, Council sent some proposals back to staff for further review.

Now, in October, four months later, there has been no report back to the public -- just complete inaction by city leaders -- by *you* -- to alleviate the suffering of Concord's tenants and families.

So, we ask you, what is the appropriate response for tenants and residents?

A silver lining is that while this Council has delayed and opted out of helping families who rent here in Concord, the state legislature and Governor recognized the crisis at hand, and took key steps this month to help families who are struggling. AB 1482, which was signed into law last week, limits rent gouging statewide by limiting annual rent increases to 5% plus CPI. It also offers some renters protections with a just cause clause, though it only applies after 12 months of occupying a unit. Responsibility for enforcing AB 1482 will fall on municipalities like Concord, and we will be watching to ensure the City meets this critical obligation.

This new legislation is a critical step by our statewide leaders that we applaud. But this act alone is not enough to stop the displacement we see in Concord. This past year 828 people were displaced in Concord and we know many are now homeless. **Therefore, we remain resolved to come back to this Council yet again, because Concord tenants are still in need of immediate relief.**

Due in part to your years of inaction, **Concord's homeless population swelled** from 252 to 350 last year, an almost 40% increase in a single year. Concord had the highest number of homeless residents of all of the cities listed. A total of 882 people in the 2019 Point in Time count reported that they lost their housing in Concord last year. Many of these individuals and families end up on the street.

In our Concord tenant clinics, we are hearing that many landlords are already raising rents and moving tenants out in order to maximize profits in advance of AB 1482's implementation in January. So, we are asking the Council to chart a new course here by actually standing up for tenant rights, to ensure that this new law works for tenants and not against them.

Specifically, we ask the Council to:

1. Pass an emergency resolution establishing a **moratorium on no-cause evictions until January 2020 when just cause under AB 1482 goes into effect.**
2. Create a **legal fund** for tenants whose rights are violated under the law.
3. Establish a **rent registry** in this city so that you can help monitor rent increases.

The state and other cities ARE moving to deal with this rental crisis in concrete ways. We will not give up on asking this Council to do the same. Please step into your leadership and support our community's residents by adopting these recommended policies as soon as possible.