

March 4, 2020

Councilmember Jane Prince - Ward 7
15 Kellogg Blvd. West
320-C City Hall
St Paul, Mn 55102

Dear Councilmember Prince,

I participated in yesterday's discussion with a working group that included elected officials, senior administrators in the City Administration, the leadership of the Minnesota Multi Multi-Housing Association, and five St. Paul housing providers who collectively offer housing to an estimated 10,000 of our fellow citizens.

During this conversation, city representatives shared draft language for the S.A.F.E. Housing St. Paul policy agenda, describing the policies and ordinances as reflecting the input of both owners and renters. Unfortunately, this description is inaccurate.

To date, the process and its outcome do not reflect the knowledge, expertise and insight of key stakeholders – those housing providers who offer renters with safe, affordable and well-maintained housing. Our main concerns include factors that discourage investment in such housing at a time when this is a critical need, not just here but across the state and around the country. Specifically, these concerns include:

- a. Tenant Screening Guidelines
- b. Security Deposit Limitations
- c. Just Cause Notice

The most flawed element in the proposed ordinance is the "Just Cause" provision. As drafted, this provision would enable and protect individuals who engage in disruptive behaviors in rental housing communities, especially those who harass – even threaten – fellow residents. Operating properties to benefit *all* residents is a challenge, and this proposed provision will fundamentally impair property managers from creating and maintaining a safe, peaceful and well-maintained housing environment.

Yesterday, we were informed that the Mayor will be holding a press conference today to announce the S.A.F.E. agenda. This apparent rush to stake out a public position will not facilitate the best possible outcome for those who deserve safe, affordable and well-maintained housing.

All stakeholders would benefit if this process were to begin with a more substantive back-and-forth between all stakeholders, rather than pushing to impose a quick solution. Are there bad landlords? Absolutely, just as there are bad tenants. We should not countenance either. But if this one-size-fits-all policy goes into effect without significant changes, the St. Paul rental housing market will become much more challenging for local families seeking safe, affordable and well-maintained housing.

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I look forward to talking with you at your earliest convenience about advancing our shared goals, so that we can deliver what matters most to our community – expanding access to safe, affordable and well-maintained housing to all who need it.

Sincerely,

Bill Bisanz - Real Estate Equities