



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Los Altos-Mountain View Area**

September 15, 2019

Mayor Matchak and Members of the City Council
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View, CA 94041

Re: Council Meeting Sept. 17th – Agenda Item # 7.2 Potential 2020 CSFRA Amendments

The LWV would like to comment on some of the possible modifications to CSFRA that the subcommittee discussed including in a ballot initiative. As we stated, our local LWV did a comprehensive study of rent stabilization and just cause programs throughout California after CSFRA was passed by the voters. We concluded that the Mountain View charter amendment was fair to landlords and tenants and benefits the entire community by providing more stable housing. Therefore, we would be opposed to changes that undermine the basic principles of CSFRA.

After reviewing the proposals made by the CSFRA subcommittee, **we would recommend that the City not proceed with a ballot initiative. There were very few modifications which we could support and which we believe Mountain View voters would support.**

Two proposed modifications are particularly concerning. First, we believe the voters understood when they voted for Measure V that tying annual rent increases to CPI is key to making rent increases reasonable. Most cities with rent control in California, especially those with similar programs and those with the longest-running programs, use CPI as their standard. And as the staff report states, most set increases at less than CPI. By these standards, Mountain View's CSFRA which uses 100% of CPI seems very reasonable. A higher annual increase would make it difficult for tenants who do not typically get raises as high as CPI. We are concerned that the "good actor" landlord provision proposed to allow some landlords a higher rent increase would be difficult to implement and enforce.

A second concern is building in too much flexibility. We acknowledge that there are some parts of CSFRA that could be modified or tweaked, but these seem to be minor issues that don't warrant the time and effort spent on a ballot initiative. Streamlined applications for seismic upgrades could perhaps be done without a charter amendment, especially if the Council makes seismic upgrades mandatory. A key fact pointed out in the staff report is that most cities have few petitions for cost recovery for capital improvements because housing providers can recover costs due to vacancy decontrol. If streamlined petitions were to be allowed for environmental sustainability improvements, we agree with the staff recommendation that these improvements should benefit the tenants.

With regard to mobile homes, we believe the most straightforward step would be for the Council to pass a separate ordinance protecting mobile home park owners and tenants.

We believe that giving the RHC or the Council discretion to change basic elements of CSFRA, such as who is covered by CSFRA (perhaps opening up the issue of means-testing) or changing the vacancy rate that triggers sunset of CSFRA, would significantly gut CSFRA. We could not support a ballot initiative that gives such open-ended discretion to the RHC and/or Council and we believe the voters would not support this either.

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