



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

October 12, 2019

Chair Margaret Abe-Koga and Members Chris Clark and Lucas Ramirez
Council CSFRA Subcommittee

October 14th Meeting of Council CSFRA Subcommittee

The LWV would like to comment once again on some of the possible modifications to CSFRA that the subcommittee discussed including in a ballot initiative. We repeat that 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.

Initially, we want to state that we believe that the time, cost, and effort spent on a Council-initiated ballot initiative would be better spent on more important City priorities such as anti-displacement policies and solutions for the homeless and vehicle-dwellers. Council could work quickly to pass an ordinance regarding mobile home park space and clarify in that ordinance how the funding will be provided if RHC is asked to monitor this ordinance. Most of the other proposed modifications are either relatively unnecessary or are contrary to the intent of CSFRA.

The most serious modification still being considered by your committee is possibly changing the annual rent increases allowed from CPI to a flat percentage such as 5%. As the staff report points out, most cities with rent control in California, especially those with similar programs and with the longest-running programs, use CPI as their standard, with a percentage less than CPI being common. The two Santa Clara County cities allowing 5% rent increases do not allow banking and Los Gatos does not have a comprehensive rent stabilization program like Mountain View's. By these standards, Mountain View's CSFRA which uses 100% of CPI seems very reasonable and fair to landlords. A higher annual increase would make it difficult for tenants who do not typically get raises as high as CPI.

The second main concern is building in too much flexibility regarding separate rent increase processes. CSFRA is based upon the premise that the landlord should get a fair rate of return, but this needs to be documented. Streamlined applications for seismic upgrades if these were made mandatory could probably be done without a charter amendment, according to the RHC attorneys. We understand the subcommittee's concern that there may be environmental sustainability improvements, such as EV charging stations, that will not be required or be a code enforcement issue. However, the guideline that these improvements must benefit the tenant, as mentioned in the staff report, is very subjective. We believe that the CSFRA standard rent increase process should be retained.

Most of the other proposed modifications are **minor clarifications** that do not warrant a ballot initiative, in our opinion.

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