



April 18, 2021

Chair Ramos and Members of the Rental Housing Committee
City of Mountain View
500 Castro Street
Mountain View 94041

Re: RHC Meeting April 19, Agenda Item 9.2 – Eviction Prevention and Defense Program

Dear Chair Ramos and Members of the RHC:

The League of Women Voters supports cost-effective prevention services to assist those on the edge of becoming homeless from losing their housing. For this reason, we support the staff's recommendation to provide legal assistance to tenants who will be facing eviction when the eviction moratorium is lifted. It is estimated that at least 15% of tenants have accumulated debt during the pandemic and will not be able to pay what is required to stay in their homes. The State is providing rent relief, but there will not be enough money for all those who need it, based upon the high number of applications already for help.

Currently, RHC staff provides robust counseling services to tenants and landlords, working especially with Project Sentinel and CSA, but actual legal services are not funded. Approximately 95% of the tenants in Santa Clara County facing unlawful detainer actions (evictions) are unrepresented by counsel, while almost all landlords have lawyers representing them, putting tenants at a serious disadvantage if an unlawful detainer is filed. Most nearby jurisdictions with rent stabilization, including San Francisco, Berkeley, San Jose and Richmond, already provide legal assistance.

Staff is recommending a maximum of \$45,000, paid out of the RHC budget, so this will be cost-neutral to the City, one of the principles the LWV recommends. Other cities with rent stabilization are spending a lot more, so perhaps the RHC should consider committing more than \$45,000. We believe the money will be well-spent in terms of preventing homelessness, which can lead to public health issues especially during this pandemic. Adding legal services to the current counseling programs would provide more housing stability and sustainability for the City. We urge the RHC to approve this program. (Please send any comments about this letter to Donna Yobs at dmyobs@yahoo.com).

Lisa McLain, President
Donna Yobs Co-Chair, Housing Committee
LWV of Los Altos Mountain View

cc: Anky van Deursen Kimbra McCarthy