

(salutation)

My name is Alysha Gardner, and I am both a resident of New Haven and a Senior Policy Analyst with the Partnership for Strong Communities, one of Connecticut's leading organizations for housing policy research. I support OR-2024-0018, Ordinance Amendment of the Board of Alders of the City of New Haven Amending the Process for Appeals of Housing Code Citations, and OR-2023-0031, Ordinance Amendment of the New Haven Code of Ordinances Approving the Amendment to Title V – Housing Code Par 102 – Penalties of the City of New Haven Code of Ordinances. **I strongly urge the Board of Alders to vote in favor of both of these ordinances.**

Our organization compiles housing data by municipality across the state using the [Housing Data Profiles](#), which brings together housing statistics from the federal census and other sources. I would like to present some pertinent statistics on our city's housing stock for the Board to consider:

- 63% of all residents of New Haven are currently renting their homes
- 48% of renter occupied units in New Haven were built before 1950 and another 21% before 1970.
- In other words, nearly 3 in every 4 rental units is at least 54 years old.
- 1 in every 2 rental units is at least 74 years old

The age of housing is an important indicator for potential environmental hazards. Homes built prior to 1950, without undertaking significant renovations, likely have high concentrations of lead paint. Poor insulation is also common in older units, leading to high heating and cooling costs or, in the worst situations, health risks from extreme temperatures. Other health and safety concerns managed by the housing code include issues of mold, water damage, structural integrity, indoor air quality, and pest control from insects and rodents. In a city like New Haven with old units, landlords have a responsibility to their tenants to promptly respond to maintenance requests. While many landlords, particularly those in small or owner-occupied units, do fulfil this responsibility to their tenants, there are enough bad actors in New Haven's housing space that have brought us to this point because they are not willing to proactively maintain these older units.

I would now like to share some statistics on New Haven's renter population which is, again, roughly 2 in every 3 city residents.

- 54% of all renters are considered cost-burdened, or paying over 30% of their income in rent
 - o 25% of renters are paying over 30% of their income in rent; 29% are paying over 50% of their income in rent
- In concrete numbers again, this means that roughly 1 in 3 residents of New Haven are paying over 30% of their take-home pay in rent; 1 in 5 residents are paying over 50% of their income in rent.

Currently, the lack of prompt enforcement of housing code violations functionally traps a large percentage of our city residents – our neighbors, and your constituents – in unsafe living conditions. As demonstrated from our city statistics, many renters do not have the financial resources to do the repairs themselves or find other housing accommodations. The proposed changes will protect tenants from negligent landlords in a timely manner; it will have no impact on landlords who already ensure safe living environments for their tenants.

As a renter, my apartment building was constructed 69 years ago. I have encountered a number of situations where my living situation has felt unsafe for myself and especially my young children. When my son was 6 months old and couldn't use blankets, we had no heat for over 2 weeks in the middle of winter. Our indoor window sill broke, our oven and refrigerator had both stopped working, and we have had mice running around our kitchen and bedrooms. In all of these situations, we were able to call and request repairs and our landlord has responded promptly to make our home safe again. *I was lucky.* Many other New Haven residents are not – but **a safe home should not be a matter of luck. The city has a responsibility to protect the rights and basic human dignity of its renters, and the Board of Alders should work towards this goal by supporting these two ordinances.**

Sincerely,

Alysha Gardner

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