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DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

August 10, 2021

RE: DPSFV Supports H.R. 4237 [Tenant Empowerment Act]

Representatives of the Honorable San Fernando Valley Delegation:

On behalf of the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley (DPSFV), we are pleased to report that our Executive Board voted to support H.R. 4237, the Tenant Empowerment Act, which strengthens HUD tenant protections and provides them with the tools necessary to improve the quality of their homes. We urge you to support H.R. 4237.

DPSFV was founded in 1978 and is chartered by the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee. Our organization is the coordinating body for a coalition of twenty-one Democratic Clubs located in the six Assembly Districts (38, 39, 43, 45, 46, and 50) which are wholly or partially in the San Fernando Valley.

The DPSFV Political Action Committee met last month to discuss H.R. 4237 and voted to recommend that the DPSFV E-Board support this vital piece of legislation. The committee noted that, in the face of an unprecedented affordable housing crisis, millions of cost-burdened families in America have seen their lives improved as a result of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s public and assisted rental housing programs. However, for some HUD residents, housing comes at the cost of their health. Across the country, some tenants have been forced to live in substandard conditions, lacking sufficient hot water, reliable heat, or a roof that keeps out rain and snow. Tenants of color, in particular, are disproportionately impacted by health-related hazards in these homes such as mold, allergens, lead, and poor air quality.

The Tenant Empowerment Act will empower tenants with the tools they need to hold HUD and providers accountable for poor housing conditions and improve the quality of their homes by:

- Enabling tenants living in project-based housing to hold their rent contribution in escrow if HUD determines a unit is in serious violation of safe housing standards with the option of a negotiated rent release if the project owner reaches measurable repairs benchmarks;
- Providing them with the right to judicial enforcement of project owner agreements with HUD to ensure they address serious violations;
- Increasing transparency to residents by enabling them to access certain building information; reviews, inspection reports, and capital needs assessments;
- Funding tenant participation services, such as outreach and training of tenants and technical assistance;
- Extending right to organize protections to tenants in project-based voucher buildings;
- Establishing a national repair and deduct policy for housing choice voucher holders;
- Allowing tenants to participate in certain portions of HUD's physical inspection and management review process; and
- Instituting measures that would ensure tenants' rental assistance payments are uninterrupted in case of a foreclosure.

Safe and stable housing should be a right and reality for every person in America. It is time for a comprehensive approach to equity and justice in housing, centering the fair treatment of tenants, enforcement of their rights, and ensured housing stability. We urge you to support H.R. 4237.

Please note that DPSFV will be tracking this bill as it travels through the Legislature. Your voting record will be noted and may be considered should you ever seek our endorsement. Your office is always welcome to contact DPSFV if you have any questions.

Sincerely and respectfully,



Chair Sean M. Rivas
Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley

cc: Congressional Members Sherman, Cárdenas, Lieu, Schiff, and Pressley (author)
U.S. Senators Feinstein and Padilla

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