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Help Stop a Proposed Ordinance That Will Devastate Affordable Housing in Los Angeles

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I hate politics. I do. Politics always seem so complicated -- I like things simple. Plus, to me, politics means "lots of talk and little action." I'd rather just start working hard to make things better than to waste years arguing who is right or wrong. But obviously if you're someone like me who gives their all to fight homelessness, politics cannot be avoided.

That's the case with the Community Care Facilities Ordinance. Here I am minding my own business, just trying to build Invisible People while battling my own survival, and I start to hear all this chatter about some law that could hurt what little affordable housing we have now.

From what I understand Councilmember Mitchell Englander, representing 12th District Northwest San Fernando Valley, is proposing a citywide ordinance in an attempt to regulate sober living homes. But it looks like the ordinance is based on NIMBYism and may drastically reduce affordable housing for disabled, veterans, elderly, homeless, and other marginalized people.

Greg Spiegel, Director of Policy and Communications at Inner City Law Center, writes in a recent post:

"The ordinance requires that in a neighborhood zoned for single family homes and duplexes a home can have only one lease. If a home has two or more leases, such as where two families

are sharing or where a person with disabilities is living in shared housing, the ordinance would categorize the home as a "boarding house." Under current law, boarding houses are prohibited in residential zones. Thus, by categorizing all homes with multiple leases as boarding houses, the ordinance would eliminate shared housing in these residential zones.

"The elimination of shared housing in residential zones would fall most heavily on people with disabilities for whom shared housing provides the best and most prevalent opportunity to live independently. Over 250 units of government-subsidized shared housing for people with disabilities would be eliminated under this proposal. By requiring that they be on only one lease, the ordinance either eliminates the housing (federal programs require separate leases for shared housing), or requires everyone who is sharing to be on one lease. Putting everyone on one lease puts a family at the mercy of a total stranger -landlords could evict one tenant based on the behavior of the co-tenant.

"The ordinance would also devastate working families. In Los Angeles, over 43,000 families share housing in single family homes. Families share to make housing more affordable, to live in safer neighborhoods and to allow their children to attend better schools. Much of that shared housing is in residential zones. The proposed ordinance would eliminate this shared housing or require that they share one lease, making them vulnerable to eviction."

Point blank honest: That's scary! Los Angeles is not alone having an affordable housing crisis, but rentals here are insane. Yes, you see construction all around the city that will soon have a sales sign "starting at \$600,000." Downtown I have seen rental signs for newly built condos starting at over a million dollars. My point is while all the new construction is to house all the rich people reducing affordable housing stock for us poor folk will cause a serious crisis throughout the city. Reducing what we need more of is just stupid!

Sober living homes are a crucial component to rehabilitating drug addicts and people getting out of prison. There is also a huge housing need for people who cannot qualify for SSI, yet for whatever reason are not employable.

Sober living homes help in so many ways. We need more sober living type homes for people with low or no income. Most are great, but I have heard horror stories of our homeless friends being taken advantage of. So I get it. The issue is needing to regulate sober living homes. But there may be a better solution. For example, the Orange County Sheriff's operate a sober living certificate program. To me, we should look at something like that and avoid the costly court battle this Community Care Facilities Ordinance is headed.

To better help me understand the dynamics of all this I asked Kerry Morrison, executive director of Hollywood Business Improvement District, to record a short interview. I have crazy respect for Kerry. Obviously



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For Good's Business Task Force and was newly appointed by the mayor to be on the board for LAHSA .

We can stop this! The United Way [disclosure: former client] has listed all of Los Angeles's council member's contact info along with a nifty tool to create a letter on this blog post. Please let Councilmember Englander know how you feel about this insane ordinance that's headed down a path to cost tax payers lots of money.