



CITY OF FORT WAYNE

THOMAS C. HENRY, MAYOR

March 5, 2020

The Honorable Liz Brown
The Honorable Justin Busch
The Honorable Dennis Kruse
Indiana Senate
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Senators:

We are writing to ask that you oppose any bill that includes language harmful to the Fort Wayne community similar to what was amended into SB 340 last week by the Indiana House of Representatives. In particular, that amended language will decrease tenant rights and contribute to the rising number of evictions in our state by doing the following:

- Ban Indiana cities from requiring landlords to provide tenants with information on their legal rights;
- Decrease the ability of city leaders to impose fines on landlords who retaliate against tenants; and
- Award attorney fees plus damages to landlords who are sued for retaliation and are successful in court; similar recompense is not provided for tenants who are successful in court.

These changes proposed in the amendment originally added to SB 340 likely will increase the number of evictions, which have already reached a crisis level in many Indiana cities, including Fort Wayne. According to Eviction Labs, Fort Wayne ranks thirteenth in the nation in evictions. In 2016, there were 3,049 evictions in our city, more than three times higher than the national average. Additionally, almost 60 percent of initial eviction filings resulted in termination of tenancy. This means that only 40 percent of tenants were aware of their rights and able to successfully negotiate a resolution with their landlord.

With more than 40,000 renter households in Fort Wayne, the problem of eviction has far-reaching impacts not only on individuals but also our community at-large. Evictions place additional burdens on our homeless shelters, school systems, and social service agencies. Further, evictions jeopardize the stability of families and children, forcing them to quickly uproot their lives and change schools.

Moreover, this language is a significant policy change for which little debate has been had. We would like to discuss the local impacts of the potential change more fully with you and are very concerned by how little time is left in the current legislative session to do so. We believe this issue should be studied further to allow for more dialogue.

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to vote down any bill that includes the language previously amended into SB 340, protect the rights of renters and allow municipalities to address the housing concerns in our communities.



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THOMAS C. HENRY, MAYOR

Sincerely,

Thomas C. Henry, Mayor, City of Fort Wayne

Kelly Lundberg, Deputy Director, City of Fort Wayne Community Development,
Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services

Denise Anderson, Executive Director, Vincent Village

Rev. Joshua Gale, Executive Director, Just Neighbors Interfaith Homeless Network

Steve Hoffman, President/CEO, Brightpoint

Paula Hughes-Schuh, CEO, YWCA of Northeast Indiana

Nikki Quintana, Executive Director, Fort Wayne Metropolitan Human Relations Commission

Lisa Smith, Executive Director, Mental Health America of Northeast Indiana

Deanna Szyndrowski, CEO, SCAN, Inc.

Dawn M. Witte, Finance and Development Coordinator, Fort Wayne Center for Nonviolence