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In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

# Sacramento Residents Call for Stronger Tenants' Rights

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

**G**ina Massey's South Sacramento apartment has rats and electrical issues — problems, through no fault of her own recently landed her in the ER. So, like any responsible tenant, she reported the issues to her landlord.

Speaking to the Sacramento City Council, Massey, 58, expressed her frustration about her situation. Instead of finding a maintenance person at her front door, she received an eviction notice for reporting the problems.

"I'm a disabled senior experiencing physical and mental distress," Massey told the Council, asking it to act against "bad landlords."

Massey, who must move by the end of August with nowhere to go, was among 17 local tenants and housing activists who told the council on June 25 that new protections are needed for Sacramento's 246,000 renters.

Most of the speakers, including Massey, belong to a tenants' union formed by the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), a nonprofit that advocates for tenants' rights and receives support from The California Endowment to provide general education and strengthen coalition building in the region.

Jovana Fajardo, ACCE's Sacramento director supports stronger laws for Sacramento tenants, pointing out, "City

laws are always stronger than state protections."

Last year, ACCE helped collect over 44,000 local voter signatures on petitions calling for a rent-control initiative on Sacramento's 2020 ballot. Among other things, that measure would cap rent increases at 5% and prohibit unfair evictions.

**"I SUPPORT REASONABLE RENT CAPS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE ARE LOW VACANCY RATES."**

**Darrell Steinberg**  
Sacramento Mayor

Though the initiative qualified to be on the ballot, it hasn't been scheduled for the March primary or the November general election. Fearing it will not go on the ballot at all, some speakers demanded that the council itself enact rent control.

Because the topic of rent control wasn't on the agenda, a few activists took the mic during public comments, when anyone can voice their concerns.



Edith Fajardo (left) strives to protect tenants like Gina Massey (right) from "bad landlords." Massey was given an eviction notice from her Sacramento apartment for reporting problems with the unit.  
Photo by Edgar Sanchez

One Councilman was optimistic, stating that he hoped to find compromise by talking to local housing and business groups on this matter.

And in a later statement, Mayor Darrell Steinberg said: "I support reasonable rent caps, especially when there are low vacancy rates. I'm hopeful my colleagues on the council and advocates from all sides can reach a compromise that protects tenants and doesn't create a disincentive to build housing."

Residents eagerly await to see if the initiative for rent control makes the ballot.

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