

Berkeley Tenants Union

2022 Blake Street, Berkeley, CA 94703 | berkeleytenants.org | (510) 982-669



Dear Mayor and City Council,

The Berkeley Tenants Union is deeply concerned at the skyrocketing pace of rent increases throughout the city. Many Berkeley residents can no longer afford to live in the city they have called home for so long. As we face the worst affordable housing crisis in history, it is imperative that we focus on solutions that address the stock of affordable housing in the city.

BTU has consistently helped tenants who have been threatened with evictions. We believe that many of these evictions can be prevented under reasonable regulations. Cities such as San Francisco have recently pushed forward regulations preventing evictions for minor offenses. By applying similar policies in Berkeley, we can help protect many tenants from facing disastrous evictions.

Additionally, BTU is worried at the safety of many rental units. All too often, tenants unknowingly place themselves at risk in housing that is not up to code. Much of this is due to a lack of information provided to tenants about their rights and the safety of their units. For example, in a 2009 survey by the Rent Board, 45% of tenants reported an inspection in the previous year, but only 16% reported getting a copy of Schedule A to certify the safety of the unit. Since many tenants do not know of the existence of Schedule A, code violations may go unnoticed, posing a safety risk to tenants.

BTU wants to ensure tenants are able to report any violations without fear of reprisal. While other city departments such as the Fire Department allow for confidential complaints, currently complaints regarding the housing code are not. We believe that enabling confidential complaints will help identify and resolve habitability issues in a more effective manner.

For these reasons, the Berkeley Tenants Union expresses its support for the following items:

- Item 20: Refer to the Rent Stabilization Board to Consider Creating an Ordinance Preventing Evictions for Minor Offenses
- Item 30: Revising the Rental Housing Safety Program
- Item 31: Housing Advisory Commission Referral: Revise or Waive Housing Trust Fund Guidelines on Predevelopment Funds to Facilitate More Viable Applications to Upcoming Funding Cycles
- Item 32: Creating a Comprehensive Affordable Housing Action Plan by Considering 27 Housing Proposals and Referring to the Housing Advisory Commission and Rent Stabilization Board

We hope that you will vote in support of protecting the rights of tenants, promoting more affordable housing, and improving the safety of rental units. If we do not act now, we will soon face an irreversible situation where thousands of people of middle and lower income will be priced out of Berkeley. Let's make Berkeley safe and affordable for everyone.

Sincerely,

Berkeley Tenants Union