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New Report Paints Stark Picture of LA County's Deepening Housing & Homelessness Crisis and Makes Case for Rent Caps

UCLA Law School and Public Counsel Highlight the Human Costs of Rising Rents and Identify Rent Stabilization as a Key Policy to Address LA's Housing Crisis

LOS ANGELES—Today, UCLA School of Law Community Economic Development Clinic and Public Counsel, in partnership with Eastside LEADS and Unincorporated Tenants United, released [*Priced Out, Pushed out, Locked Out*](#), a new report detailing the depth of the housing crisis in Los Angeles County. Additionally, the report makes the connection between rising rents and homelessness and makes the case for enacting permanent rent stabilization in unincorporated LA County as an immediate tool to stabilize families and communities.

“Shelter is a basic human necessity. Yet housing has become so unaffordable in LA County that it has become a luxury – a privilege of wealth rather than the fundamental right for all it should be,” said **Scott Cummings**, UCLA Law School Professor and lead researcher on the report. “This report reveals the extent of the crisis, documenting the startling number of renters who live in a constant state of insecurity, while also providing practical solutions we can implement right now.”

Katie McKeon, Public Counsel attorney and one of the lead authors of the report, further underscored the significance of the report, adding: “*Priced out, Pushed Out, Locked Out* shines a bright light on the devastating impacts of the failure to adequately protect tenants, by painting a stark picture of our county, where relentlessly rising rents all too frequently push people out of their homes, out of their communities and, ultimately, onto the streets.”

With the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority releasing its annual homelessness data for Los Angeles County last week, the report offers valuable insights into the 12% uptick in homelessness seen this past year. In particular, the report notes, with skyrocketing rents, tenants in unincorporated Los Angeles County who lack protections have been vulnerable to unreasonable rent increases, severe habitability issues and unfair evictions that displace people from their homes. Along with insights into the rise in homelessness, the report provides a comprehensive set of policy recommendations, including:

- Adopt a permanent rent stabilization ordinance in unincorporated LA County, that can also serve as a model for other cities in the County that lack such protections.
- Adopt a permanent just cause eviction ordinance to protect tenants from no-cause evictions that often lead to homelessness.
- Guarantee a fully funded right to counsel for tenants, including pre-eviction services and rental assistance to tenants at risk of eviction.

“This report coupled with LA County homeless count makes clear that our County is in crisis,” said **Pamela Agustin**, organizer with Eastside LEADS and the Unincorporated Tenants United Coalition. “The status quo that has prioritized corporate landlords’ thirst for ever higher profits over the lives of tenants isn’t working and is tearing at the very fabric of our communities. While thousands of families have been able to breathe a little easier because of the temporary rent freeze, to feel truly secure, they need long-term protections that only a permanent rent stabilization ordinance can bring.”

Last September, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a temporary, six-month rent freeze that capped rent increases at 3% annually for approximately 200,000 tenants living in multi-family buildings in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The measure, introduced by Supervisors Sheila Kuehl and Hilda Solis, was based on recommendations of the Tenant Protections Working Group, which convened last year after significant

pressure from tenants in unincorporated Los Angeles County. This past April, the temporary freeze was extended until December 31, 2019 to allow time for the County to complete research necessary to effectively implement a permanent rent stabilization ordinance. In a decisive move, aligned with calls to action by tenants, the Board also voted in April to expand just cause eviction protections to all tenants across unincorporated areas of the county, ensuring that over 400,000 renters are protected from eviction without cause.

Over the six months the temporary ordinance has been in effect, real impact has been demonstrated. Legal aid organizations and tenant attorneys have been able to mount strong, winning defenses in cases of illegal rent increases as well as no-fault evictions, enabling people to remain in their homes.

In the report, **Blanca Dueñas** shares her story of battling a landlord's illegal actions and being overjoyed to find she was protected by the temporary ordinance. She noted: "Knowing I have rights and can advocate for myself, without the threat of a steep rent hike or eviction, levels the playing field and provides me piece of mind that is invaluable. To ensure we do not return to tenants living in fear of steep rent hikes and evictions for no reason, reluctant to even ask for basic repairs, the Board must act now to pass a permanent rent stabilization ordinance that protects families and keeps them in their homes."

While the report focused on data from unincorporated LA County, communities across the county - such as Inglewood, Pasadena, Glendale, Pomona and Long Beach - are embracing the recommendations as they advance their own efforts to stabilize rents. For example, the City of Inglewood is voting on a rent stabilization ordinance on Tuesday, June 11.

Jenny Delwood of Liberty Hill Foundation said, "We've all witnessed deepening inequality, decades in the making, that has impacted our housing landscape in profound ways. Fortunately, tenant leaders and activists throughout the County are organizing, building power, and calling for swift action. This report serves as a blueprint that shines a light on who is most impacted by our housing and homelessness crisis, while also endorsing key policies that can immediately stem the tide of homelessness and build stronger, more stable communities."

Community input to shape the report and its recommendations was provided by Eastside LEADS and the Unincorporated Tenants United Coalition, with support from the Liberty Hill Foundation.

For additional information about the report, coalition or their efforts please contact Kacey Bonner at kacey.bonner@gmail.com or call (310) 402-3013.

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Public Counsel is the nation's largest not-for-profit law firm of its kind with a 40-year track record of fighting for the rights of children and youth, persecuted immigrants, military veterans, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses. Its Community Development Project builds foundations for healthy, vibrant, economically stable communities by providing legal and capacity building services to community-based organizations and small businesses in the Los Angeles area. We support community led advocacy groups and community based organizations in their efforts to advance racial and economic justice and build power in low-income communities and communities of color on campaigns related to the creation and preservation of affordable housing, protecting tenants, quality employment opportunities, inclusive entrepreneurship, childcare, access to open space, and ending the criminalization of poverty.

The Community Economic Development (CED) Clinic at the UCLA School of Law provides transactional and policy-oriented legal support to community based organizations throughout Los Angeles working to ensure affordable housing and living wage jobs for all. For over 15 years, the CED clinic has represented groups building community-controlled economic institutions and promoting empowerment through the meaningful participation of communities in development and planning decisions that fundamentally affect their lives.

Eastside LEADS is a coalition of community-based organizations and residents on the eastside of Los Angeles organized around protecting residents from displacement and ensuring that new investment benefits low-income residents and is accountable to their needs and priorities. Eastside LEADS draws from the advocacy and experience of its member organizations who have been working together for many years within the Boyle Heights Building Healthy Communities initiative.

The Unincorporated Tenants United Coalition is a broad coalition of grassroots activists, legal advocates, and community organizations fighting for tenant protections in unincorporated Los Angeles. The coalition's member organizations have witnessed the striking difference between tenants living in rent-stabilized cities and those in unincorporated communities and are working together to eliminate unfair housing practices that destabilize families and communities, including unreasonable rent increases, severe habitability issues and unfair eviction practices. The coalition includes: Los Angeles Center for Community Law and Action (LACCLA), Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), LA VOICE, Public Counsel, Eastside LEADS, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ), Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP), Glendale Tenants Union (GTU), Housing Long Beach, Inner City Struggle (ICS), Inquilinos Unidos, Long Beach ICO, Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU), Pasadena Tenants Union (PTU), Pomona United for Stable Housing (PUSH), Pomona Economic Opportunity Center (PEOC) and Uplift Inglewood. The coalition is supported by the Liberty Hill Foundation.