



Why I think a Landlord and Renter's rights policy is necessary. .

My disabled uncle had to move in with me this year. His apartment complex was sold to a developer who made no changes, except to call the complex "Condos". The rent went up \$200. The tenants living there all had lease agreements that were not upheld by our courts. The courts determined that the previous landlords had sold the leases and the new landlords didn't have to honor them. And so my disabled uncle along with several of his neighbors (most had been there 3 years or more and my uncle had 9 years) could no longer afford to live in their homes and had to move. What type of ordinance could have protected him, there aren't any currently.

I work with Critical Home Repair. I refer a lot of homeowners to the LEEP program, Community Action Agency and other non-profits for energy efficiency repairs. Our renters can't take advantage of these programs for improvements to energy efficiency because they're not the owner, unfortunately most landlords wouldn't meet the income qualifications to participate in the programs, so they don't invest in energy efficiency. An energy policy for these renters could help to eliminate high utility bills.

I've seen people lose security deposits for cleaning bills, and normal wear and tear. I do realize there's good and bad on both sides. The bottom line is this, for those tenants who are vulnerable to predatory type landlord practices we need a written renters' rights policy. For those landlords who experience property damage or loss, we need protection.

I think we should collectively work with landlords, tenant associations, ACLC and the City Commission to draft a rental rights' policy that is fair to both landlords and tenants. There's no quick and easy way to do this. We must all approach this matter with open heads and hearts. It's important that we draft a policy that protects renters from predatory and unfair practices, and that doesn't cause our landlords to lose business and profit. One way we can possibly do this, is to incentivize landlords who provide energy efficient improvements to occupied properties, and work with the local utility company to devise a plan that would allow those tenants who pay a tax for LEEP be able to participate in it.

Sincerely,

Carla Lewis-Miles

Greater Duval Neighborhood Association