

Dear Gainesville Neighbors,

We, Indivisible Gainesville, wholeheartedly endorse the comprehensive Renters' Rights ordinance proposal put forward by the Alachua County Labor Coalition (ACLC). Renters in this community are due basic rights and protections, such as a safe place to live, freedom from discrimination by predatory landlords, affordable utility bills, and disclosure of their rights and responsibilities as tenants. The proposal put forward by the ACLC, in consultation with City and County Commissioners and Florida Legal Services as well as landlords, renters, neighborhood associations, faith communities, civic organizations, and other stakeholders throughout our community, is revenue-neutral, based upon existing programs with a demonstrated track record of success, and builds upon already existing services.

In the Spring of 2018, we asked hundreds of our East Gainesville neighbors the open-ended question, "What is one thing you would like our elected officials address?" The third most common response, after education and gun control, was the cost of utilities.

There are many ways that our local elected officials, in conjunction with Gainesville Regional Utilities, can remedy a number of these concerns. But even the renters who are most attentive to their thermostat are no match for homes built before the 1990s, which required little to no environmental standards, proper insulation, up-to-date plumbing, or efficient heating and air units.

Let's be clear: the Renter's Rights and Responsibilities campaign acknowledges that most landlords are fair and decent. But the ones who are not exploit the poor and exacerbate already-severe inequalities in our community.

There are few practical remedies when it comes to unfair retention of deposits, unsafe living conditions, discrimination, and energy inefficiency. Because money is the main requirement for litigation, our legal system is not a viable option for justice.

And currently there is little to no financial incentive for landlords to bring their properties up to current acceptable building standards. In this sense, the market is failing the struggling and exploited renter.

Renters who are facing what are in effect slumlords need allies. They need the authority and resources of government to step in and ensure fairness and some modicum of justice. We cannot thank the ACLC enough for bringing these issues to the community's attention. And we are heartened and hopeful to see the Gainesville City Commission taking up the matter and forming a subcommittee to come up with a solution.

The proposals put forward by the ACLC are not meant to be exclusive of other initiatives, nor are they a definitive solution for solving our community's affordable

housing challenges. But they are a solid start and a good faith measure on the part of our elected officials in a community dominated by rental housing. The supply of affordable housing needs to be increased, and there are a variety of options for accomplishing that goal. We also believe all renters in our community deserve the basic rights and protections described in the ACLC's proposal. Just as employment law establishes a clear set of rules for employer-employee relations in the workplace, both landlords and tenants would benefit from a clearer definition of their rights and responsibilities and a process for addressing negligence by either party.

Respectfully,

Indivisible Gainesville
Sandy Parker