

University Evangelical Lutheran Church and Campus Ministry

1826 West University Avenue Gainesville, FL 32603
352-373-6945 info@ulcgainesville.com
The Reverend Terrance A. Jacob, Pastor



March 31, 2019

Dear Gainesville Neighbors,

The Congregation at University Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELC) would like to express our formal endorsement of 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 and negligent landlords, affordable utility bills, and disclosure of their rights and responsibilities as tenants. Sadly, there are areas of Gainesville where these protections are not consistently practiced, as we are aware.

The goals of the Renters' Rights proposal are consistent with the mission and concerns expressed by members at UELC, seeking fairness for those in need in our community whose voices are often unheard or ignored with impunity. We have a passion for the well-being of all in our community, reflected in providing temporary shelter and meals for homeless families through Family Promise, in partnership with other churches in Gainesville. Recognizing the importance of good nutrition and realizing food deficits experienced by many in the community, we also support Gainesville Community Ministry and the Food Bank at the University of Florida. We bring fresh produce regularly to St. Francis House from our organic garden, to share the benefits of good nutrition. We support the rights of all for food enough to thrive and decent affordable housing without exorbitant utility costs or health concerns resulting from landlord neglect of the property. We welcome the opportunity to advocate for expanded access to basic, God-given human rights for all people, without discrimination. By virtue of our direct involvement with people experiencing these problems, we therefore fully support and endorse the Renters' Rights proposal.

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 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.

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.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Terrance Jacob

University Evangelical Lutheran Church, Gainesville, FL

www.ulcgainesville.com