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The following is a digest of ordinance suggestions HOME Line, a statewide tenant advocacy organization, encourages local units of government to consider to help correct the power imbalance that favors landlords over tenants in leases, law, and the courts.

The full Minnesota Tenant Bill of Rights (City Edition) is available on HOME Line's website and also provides what some localities have done to help correct the power imbalance.

Tenant Bill of Rights for Minnesota Cities Digest

The Right to a Fair Application Process: Searching for a future home is costly and stressful for many renters. This is especially true if you are low-income, have any kind of criminal record, bad credit, or belong to a population that often contends with prejudice or discrimination. Reducing unnecessary costs and addressing discrimination will make the application process fairer.

Ask your city council member to introduce an ordinance to:

- Prohibit-application screening fees.
- Limit the grounds for denying a rental application.
- Prohibit source of income discrimination.
- Require showing of the actual unit.
- Require a standardized application.

The Right to a Fair Lease: Landlords write the leases. Unsurprisingly, rental leases are written to protect landlords' interests more than tenants'. Tenants can rarely negotiate the terms of the lease meaningfully because the landlord often has many other prospective tenants who will accept virtually any lease terms. City ordinances should correct the power imbalances.

Ask your city council member to introduce an ordinance to:

- Prohibit landlords from unilaterally changing the lease.
 - Prohibit class action waivers and arbitration requirements in leases.
 - Provide tenants with freedom of expression.
 - Require landlords to disclose local contact information fully.
 - Regulate landlord towing of cars.
 - Clarify methods for paying rent.
 - Prohibit leases from limiting tenant notices in the winter.
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The Right to a Habitable Home: Everyone deserves a safe home. However, tenants usually do not have the authority to make their own repairs. They must rely on their landlord to keep the property reasonably maintained. Too often, this leads to delays in making the repairs or them not getting them done at all. Many tenants are reluctant to even ask for repairs for fear of retaliation. Policies to make rental housing fit for its intended purpose will address livability issues that tenants face while increasing cities' stock of safe and quality housing.

Ask your city council member to introduce an ordinance to:

- Create a housing code.
- Create a rental licensing program.
- Require landlords to maintain yards and remove snow.
- Provide tenants with the right to repair and deduct.
- Reduce burdens on tenants when bringing claims for repairs.
- Require landlords to conduct and disclose radon test results every three years and perform mitigation.
- Provide more options to tenants facing repair problems.
- Mandate that renters' insurance policies insure tenants who accidentally damage their rented homes by any non-intentional means, not just by fire.
- Make it easier for neighborhood organizations to help tenants in court cases.
- Update the law on inspection agencies.
- Require inspections for new leases and annually. Notice of inspection results should be given to landlords and current tenants.
- Invest city resources toward city attorney enforcement in response to substandard conditions, specifically with Tenant Remedies Actions.
- In addition to existing standards that require completion of repairs, city ordinances should further provide specific and broader remedies for tenants who have been harmed due to landlord violations of housing maintenance codes.

The Right to Reasonable Rent: Rents have increased relative to tenants' incomes for decades. At Minnesota's current minimum wage, a worker must work 82 hours per week to afford a modest one-bedroom home at Fair Market Rate. To add insult to injury, only 39 affordable and available rental homes exist per 100 extremely low-income renter households that need them. At a minimum, renters should know the true cost of renting an apartment they are interested in. However, some landlords do things, such as adding on mandatory fees or increasing the rent mid-lease. There are several city ordinances that could be put in place to help tenants in this arena.

Ask your city council member to introduce an ordinance to:

- Limit rent increases in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties.
- Prohibit rent increases during the term of the lease.
- Require notices of rent increases in month-to-month leases to allow the tenant to vacate or accept the rent increase.
- Prohibit accelerated rent clauses in residential tenancies.
- Reduce late fees to 4% instead of 8%.
- Adopt rent stabilization.
- Regulate corporate/investor ownership of single-family rental homes.
- Prohibit mandatory fees.

The Right to Safeguards Against Displacement: Evictions and involuntary (landlord-initiated) displacements significantly disrupt households by causing housing instability, negative impacts on health outcomes, and can lead to homelessness. While residential evictions have been regulated here since before Minnesota was a state, some of the guidelines have not been updated in decades. Cities can pass ordinances to secure the right to safeguards against evictions and involuntary displacements.

Ask your city council member to introduce an ordinance to:

- Require just cause for a landlord to end a lease.
- Allow tenants to terminate the lease upon loss of income.
- Allow tenants to terminate the lease when adding a new minor to a family.
- Expand the statewide 14-day (or in some cities, 30-day) pre-eviction notice requirement to material breaches of lease.

- Prohibit listing minors in eviction cases.
 - Expand defenses to eviction cases.
 - Update the rules for sheriff evictions and tenant personal property.
 - Update laws on illegal lockouts.
 - Require replacement of units and relocation benefits when affordable housing is removed.
 - Prohibit retaliation.
 - Repeal crime-free housing programs.
 - Require 30-day notice of evictions for all purposes allowing tenants to cure breaches of their leases.
 - Require landlords to submit all filed evictions to the city as a method of measuring their prevalence.
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The Right to Retain Affordable Housing: Affordable housing is incredibly scarce, especially for those at the lowest incomes in our communities. Cities can use ordinances to keep some of those living in affordable housing housed during times when their living situations are in flux.

Ask your city council member to introduce an ordinance to:

- Require replacement units and relocation benefits when affordable housing is removed.
 - Require advance notice of sale and post-sale tenant protections.
 - Provide residents with the right of first refusal in apartment sale situations.
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About HOME Line

HOME Line provides free legal, organizing, educational, and advocacy services so tenants throughout Minnesota can solve rental housing problems. Our statewide tenant hotline provides renters with free, confidential, and convenient legal information about their tenant rights. The hotline began advising renters in 1992 and expanded to cover the entire state in 2014. Since opening in 1992, we have advised over 354,000 renter households from every county in the state. In 2024, we advised 19,932 households.

Because we work directly with so many households through our hotline and direct organizing, we have unique insight into the issues facing many Minnesotan tenants and the policy fixes that will help them thrive.