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Mayor Joe Hogsett, Community Partners Announce Tenant Protection and Legal Assistance Initiative

INDIANAPOLIS – Today, Mayor Joe Hogsett joined Indiana Legal Services, Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, and community stakeholders to announce a multifaceted tenant protection and legal assistance initiative. Under the proposed initiative, \$250k in new funding will be allocated to increase resources for tenants dealing with housing challenges including substandard conditions, eviction, and retaliatory actions by bad-actor landlords.

“Too many individuals and families in Indianapolis are struggling with the realities of poor housing conditions without knowing where to turn for help,” said Mayor Joe Hogsett. “To be clear: the villains here are not the many responsible landlords and property owners throughout our city, but rather those few who are failing to hold up their end of the bargain. Every renter has the right to safe and secure housing, and today, with Indiana Legal Services and Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, we are taking a meaningful first step in providing the resources necessary to protect and assist Indianapolis tenants.”

In partnership with Indiana Legal Services, the initiative will:

- Require all landlords to provide tenants a “Notice of Tenant Rights and Responsibilities” in order to ensure renters are better informed of the laws that affect tenants and landlords. Additionally, the notice will provide information for tenants who are facing housing challenges or think their rights are being violated.
- Launch a Tenant Information Hotline which will serve as a streamlined point of contact for tenants seeking information or advice.
- Create the “Tenant Legal Assistance Project,” which will connect tenants with pro bono legal representation for claims against landlords who have violated tenants’ rights to safe, livable housing. The “Tenant Legal Assistance Project” will be managed by Indiana Legal Services, with the Indianapolis and Marion County Bar Associations helping to recruit attorneys to serve as legal representation.
- Provide additional support for Indiana Legal Services’ “Eviction Avoidance Project” which provides consultations and, where appropriate, free legal representation to defend tenants in eviction cases.
- Implement a new tenant protection ordinance that can penalize landlords if they take an adverse action against a tenant in retaliation for the tenant exercising their rights, including seeking a Health Department inspection, calling the Tenant Information Hotline, or seeking legal assistance. The ordinance would specify that



landlords could be penalized \$2500 (\$7500 for a repeat violation), as allowed under state law.

The proposed plan is expected to be submitted to the city-county council later this month. If passed, the Tenant Information Hotline and Tenant Legal Assistance Project are slated to launch this spring, with the notice requirement going into effect mid-year.

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