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FHCCI URGES “NO” VOTE ON SB 340

INDIANAPOLIS, IN – The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) urges a “No” vote on SB 340. On the last House Judiciary Committee hearing of the session, on an unrelated bill, in a short session that heard no tenant friendly bills, SB 340 was amended to dramatically take away the rights of Hoosier tenants in our state and reshapes how Indiana cities can effectively address housing problems within their borders.

The FHCCI hears far too often from tenants who are experiencing significant habitability problems, who fear or have experienced retaliation for trying to address those problems, those do not have adequate representation in court, those who struggle to find affordable or accessible housing for their families, or experience the harmful impacts of discrimination. We commend the actions of the Indianapolis City-Council on Monday evening to refuse to back down in passage of Proposals 40/41 which would assist in addressing housing challenges facing too many of our city’s residents.

“SB 340 is one of the most harmful housing bills I have seen in my over 20 year housing career,” stated Amy Nelson, Executive Director of the FHCCI. “Not only does SB 340 modify current law to take away any fines for those landlords who retaliate against tenants with just cause, but it even goes so far as to say that a City cannot even demand that *tenants be informed* of their most basic housing rights under law, amongst other changes.”

The FHCCI believes this is not just an Indianapolis problem but a statewide housing crisis. Each year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition publishes a report on the lack of affordable housing options across almost every county in our state and all urban centers. Several Indiana cities are also ranked as the highest evicting cities in the country. On an almost weekly basis, news reports are published across our state on serious housing habitability issues being faced by Hoosier tenants. Corporate landlords have also been extremely active in our state buying up foreclosed homes, changing them to rentals, and putting tenants at disadvantages when problems arise due to their out of state contacts.

The FHCCI is further concerned with the several year trend taken by the Indiana General Assembly to continue to chip away at housing protections for Indiana’s housing residents who may be most at risk of homelessness and facing the significant lack of safe, affordable housing options for themselves and their families.

Some of the Indiana General Assembly's other recent actions have included:

- **SB 558** (2017): Banned cities from passing ordinances to promote inclusionary zoning as it relates to affordable housing. This bill occurred when the City of Bloomington was trying to mandate affordable housing requirements to address housing gaps in its city.
- **HB 1300** (2015): Section 8 discrimination protection ban. Prohibited a county, municipality, or township from adopting an ordinance that requires or would have the effect of requiring a landlord to participate in: (1) a Section 8 program of the federal Housing Act of 1937; or (2) a similar program concerning housing. This bill occurred when the City of Indianapolis was debating passage of a receipt of public assistance housing discrimination protection to address the high denial rates for persons using a housing choice voucher to pay their rent.
- **HB 1165 (2015)/HB 1403** (2014): Rental registration and inspection programs./Provides that the owner of a rental unit assessed any fee by a political subdivision pertaining to the rental unit may: (1) notify the tenants of the rental unit of the assessment of the fee; and (2) require the tenants of the rental unit to reimburse the owner for the payment of the fee. These bills gutted city rental inspection programs across our state working to ensure basic habitability in rental housing.

"We need everyone who believes that SB 340 goes too far to contact your state House Representative today to voice your opposition to SB 340," continued Nelson. "For far too long, the housing industry groups have been the only voices heard by far too many in our Indiana General Assembly. Every Hoosier deserves safe, affordable, accessible housing free from discrimination. It's time for our legislators to hear their stories and support their rights, too."

Info on SB 340: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills/senate/340>

Don't Know Who Your Legislator Is? Go to: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/?fbclid=IwAR16prlcyO1DgXnSiaTBjIvHfKdENqMXLoMB25T7x-M0QJfSevUdfmMrPg>

Learn more on the FHCCI's Public Policy Page: <https://www.fhcci.org/programs/public-policy/>

#HoosierTenantsMatterToo

The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) is a private, non-profit fair housing organization founded in 2011 and based in Indianapolis, Indiana. Its mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities by eliminating housing discrimination through advocacy, enforcement, education and outreach. For more information, visit: www.fhcci.org