



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – March 2, 2020

Contact: Jessica Love, Prosperity Indiana, jlove@prosperityindiana.org; 317-222-1221, ext. 402

Amy Nelson, Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, anelson@fhcci.org; 317-644-0673, ext. 1001

NEARLY 300 ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS URGE “NO” VOTE ON SB 340

INDIANAPOLIS, IN – Today, the Indiana House is scheduled to vote on SB 340. A letter with signatures from nearly 300 organizations and individuals from around Indiana has been sent to the Speaker Brian Bosma and members of the Indiana House of Representatives voicing concern and urging a “No” vote on SB 340. This opposition is in light of the surprise last-minute amendment to the bill on February 24 that will have a significant negative impact on renters across the state.

Although SB 340’s amendment appears to have been in response to the City of Indianapolis’ new Housing Initiative, it will have statewide impact and applicability. SB 340 gives preference to landlords in a variety of ways. Most sweepingly, it takes away a city’s ability to establish landlord-tenant laws. As a result, it decreases a city’s ability to address disclosure and retaliation violations through fines, allowing more types of retaliation against tenants to occur when reporting concerns. It also awards landlords sued for retaliation, who are successful in court, attorney fees plus damages. In contrast, tenants who win a retaliation suit against their landlord only get to stay in their rental unit under the existing terms and receive one month of rent in compensation, while absorbing all of their legal fees associated with the retaliation case. One of the most basic rights outlawed by the bill is a city’s ability to require that landlords provide renters with information on their legal rights as tenants. SB 340 also makes other problematic changes that overwhelmingly favor landlords.

Keith Broadnax, Senior Vice President of Business Development at Cinnaire, stated his concerns, “As an investor, lender, and advocate for affordable housing in Indiana, Cinnaire strongly opposes SB 340 and encourages a ‘No’ vote on it. This bill will be detrimental to our Hoosier families who are already struggling to support themselves. The bill removes any fines imposed on landlords who retaliate against tenants and further limits the actions of local authorities to require that tenants be informed of the basic housing rights afforded to them by law.”

Jessica Love, Executive Director of Prosperity Indiana, said, “At Prosperity Indiana, our work is built around strengthening our communities, and bills like this only tear away at the fabric of family life and local governing power. SB 340 will clip every community’s opportunity to address the bad actors who are only adding to housing instability in this state. To counteract what legislators are being told by some is good public policy, members of our General Assembly need to hear from everyone who believes that SB 340 is an overreach. If not stopped, the bill could be adopted this week. So, the

time to speak out is now. Please contact your representative immediately and ask them to vote no and kill this bill.”

Dr. Sarah Stelzner, a pediatrician and legislative chairman of the Indiana American Academy of Pediatrics shared, “We know these families and children are most vulnerable to experiencing significant health impacting issues in their rental homes, such as mold, infestations, high utility bills, and poorly maintained infrastructure. These families often fear or have experienced retaliation, including eviction, for attempting to address any problems and often have inadequate representation in court. Any eviction filed against them, whether there is a judgement or not, stays on their record and makes it even harder for a family to find quality, affordable housing in the future. We need to work to reverse the trends that have caused a dramatic increase in evictions, as well as unsafe and unhealthy housing, in a number of Indiana cities and towns. This bill seeks to undermine even local efforts to address rental habitability concerns and retaliatory evictions, which we know are leading social determinants of health.”

“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 Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (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.”

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

Don't Know Who Your Legislator Is? Go to Find Politicians in our Advocacy Action Center:

<https://www.prosperityindiana.org/Action-Center>

Learn more on the Prosperity Indiana's Public Policy Page:

<https://www.prosperityindiana.org/Policy-Priorities>

###

About Indiana Association for Community Economic Development D/B/A Prosperity Indiana

Prosperity Indiana is a statewide membership organization for the individuals and organizations strengthening Hoosier communities. Prosperity Indiana builds a better future for our communities by providing advocacy, leveraging resources, and engaging an empowered network of members to create inclusive opportunities that build assets and improve lives. Since its founding in 1986, Prosperity Indiana has grown to approximately 200 members from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.