



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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BOARD APPROVES SET OF TENANT PROTECTIONS

Amid an ongoing housing crisis, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved a set of tenant protections intended to stabilize neighborhoods and prevent homelessness.

The proposed law prevents bad faith actions by landlords who fail to perform needed repairs, evict tenants without cause, harass tenants, violate a tenant's privacy by inquiring about citizenship status, unlawfully coercing tenants to vacate premises, or discriminating against tenants based on race, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, nationality, religion, age, parenthood, marriage, pregnancy, disability, HIV/AIDS status, unit occupancy by children, or sources of income. The new law would also protect tenants from eviction for organizing or advocating for tenants' rights.

"We remain concerned that the local housing market is fostering injustices for our local tenants," Board Chair Manu Koenig said. "With homeownership inaccessible to many, these measures are necessary to stabilize housing for the 40 percent of our residents who are renters."

Within Santa Cruz County, someone making minimum wage must work the equivalent of four full-time jobs to afford a two-bedroom unit at market rates and Santa Cruz County is the second-least affordable place to live in the U.S., according to a study by the National Low Housing Coalition. The 2022 Point-In-Time Count also showed that evictions are the leading cause of homelessness locally.

To date, California's Housing is Key rent relief program has distributed \$26.5 million to local tenants unable to pay rent due for pandemic-related reasons. Santa Cruz County Superior Court also offers a self-help center to assist residents with pending legal issues, including evictions. Visit <https://www.santacruz.courts.ca.gov/self-help> for more.