



May 6, 2022

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
1025 Escobar Street
Martinez, CA 94553

Re: Raise the Roof Coalition budget request for tenant legal services - SUPPORT

Dear Supervisors,

On behalf of All Home and United Way Bay Area, **we write in support of the Raise the Roof Coalition's request for \$1.8 million to continue providing vital legal services for residents at risk of homelessness or displacement.** While our organizations have worked tirelessly to ensure tenants understand their rights and can access much needed rent relief, a lack of legal resources continues to severely impact our low-income communities—especially during the pandemic when more financially burdened tenants are facing unjust evictions.

All Home is a Bay Area organization that advances regional solutions to disrupt the cycles of poverty and homelessness and create more economic mobility for people with extremely low incomes. United Way Bay Area (UWBA) is an anti-poverty organization dedicated to supporting low-income communities throughout the Bay Area region through immediate direct service and long-term systems change. Together, alongside roughly 50 other organizations, we developed [Eight Essential Actions for the Bay Area: Preparing for the COVID-19 Eviction and Foreclosure Cliff](#), hoping to avoid the exact situation we are in now: one where tenants are facing increased harassment and unjust evictions with little to no legal support.

We applaud Contra Costa County's commitment to proactively preventing homelessness and displacement through your investment of \$600,000 in CARES Act funds, which stabilized our communities by keeping families together and preventing unnecessary evictions.

The eviction process itself creates significant harm to low-income families and families of color, even if they are able to stay housed. Getting evicted from your house and having an eviction on your court record is devastating to individuals—it can cause job loss, mental illness, and make it difficult if not impossible to find safe, stable housing in the near future. Unjust evictions destabilize the community by exacerbating displacement, severing community connections, and disrupting careers and education.

We know from experience inside and out of Contra Costa County how impactful it is for tenants to have legal representation when they are at risk of eviction. Generally, studies have shown that about 90% of landlords have legal representation, compared to only 10 percent of tenants.¹ However, when Right to Counsel programs are in place, the results are dramatic. In New York City, 86% of tenants who had representation as a result of right to counsel legislation were able to remain in their homes. San Francisco saw 67% of tenants were able to remain housed in just the first two years of their program.²

Prevention is also cost-effective—a financial services firm analyzed a program in Los Angeles and found that every dollar invested in a comprehensive tenant right-to-counsel program would save the County \$4.80 in emergency shelter, housing navigation, health care, and other costs.³

Supporting roughly 1,000 Contra Costa residents in accessing financial assistance through UWBA's SparkPoint Center this past year highlighted the significant, outstanding need of Contra Costa County's low-income communities. The number one request for residents accessing Sparkpoint last year was rental assistance, and while we were able to assist some families with our Rental Relief Fund, many families still need support. By investing in legal resources and saving funds, the County would be able to help more residents who are still financially burdened by the pandemic.

Contra Costa was one of the first counties to endorse All Home's Regional Action Plan (RAP) to reduce unsheltered homelessness by 75% by 2024. A key pillar of that plan is the 1-2-4 Framework for Homelessness Solutions, which calls for investing in four prevention interventions for every one new unit of interim/emergency housing. Eviction prevention is part of the continuum of prevention investments and increasing tenant protections is one of the RAP's eight strategic priorities. This budget allocation would solidify Contra Costa County's commitment to prevention going forward. Keeping people in their homes is one of the fastest and most impactful ways we can stop the increase in homelessness.

Contra Costa County's 2020 investment in tenant legal services built a strong program with reliable nonprofit partners that can be expanded. Indeed, there is more housing insecurity in Contra Costa County to address with such an expansion. Based on the most recent Census Household Pulse data, The National Equity Atlas estimates that 15,060 households are behind on rent in Contra Costa County, and as The Raise the Roof Coalition's recent report details, the County is only currently able to serve 46% of its homeless population.⁴ In late 2021, Antioch had the highest eviction rate in the Bay Area.⁵

¹ Center for American Progress, [A Right to Counsel is a Right to a Fighting Chance](#), October 2019.

² ACLU, [Tenants' Right to Counsel is Critical to Fight Mass Evictions and Advance Race Equity During the Pandemic and Beyond](#), January 2021.

³ Stout, [Cost-Benefit Analysis of Providing Right to Counsel to Tenants in Eviction Proceedings](#), December 2019, p. 8.

⁴ PolicyLink, [National Equity Atlas](#); email from PolicyLink staff to All Home.

⁵ KQED, [A Suburb With an Eviction Problem](#), February 14, 2022.

All Home, United Way Bay Area, and other philanthropic organizations are already investing in supporting tenants in Contra Costa County. However, we need the County's leadership and partnership to leverage these investments to serve the many residents in need of these services. This funding is crucial to sustaining and expanding a robust and equitable tenant legal services infrastructure to serve thousands of low-income families in Contra Costa County who will continue to face housing insecurity, the risk of eviction, displacement, and possibly homelessness—even as we begin to emerge from the pandemic.

We respectfully urge your support for the Raise the Roof Coalition's request for funding.

Sincerely,



Tomiquia Moss, Founder and CEO of All Home



Kevin Zwick, Chief Executive Officer of United Way Bay Area