

Laura Delventhal Testimony

Hello, my name is Laura Delventhal and I am a resident of St. Paul. My husband and I have rented within our apartment building since 2011; both of our beautiful children were born in St. Paul, and the oldest now attends public school in St. Paul. St. Paul is our home, where we have built a life and a family. We love our community and our neighborhood.

Our apartment building is part of an affordable housing program. For several years our apartment home remained affordable, but our neighborhood has become greatly gentrified in the years since the green line opened. Since we moved in, four "luxury" apartment buildings have been constructed within a stone's throw of our apartment; three more are currently under construction. More housing in our majority renter city is wonderful. But these builds have a huge impact on supposedly affordable housing. Affordable housing is not required to be truly affordable. In my case, it simply caps the amount my landlord can charge me... based on the average rent in my surrounding neighborhood. So if your neighborhood is inundated by luxury builds, your supposedly affordable rent can increase by 22% in just 3.5 years, like ours did. Our home has become less affordable every year; our most recent lease alone increased the rent by 6%. While rent stabilization is just one tool our city needs to combat the housing crisis, it is a vital one. The cries of needing more affordable housing are accurate -- but as my situation proves -- more affordable housing, without rent stabilization, does not solve the problem!

Rent stabilization is a life saving measure that caps rent increases by a predictable, reasonable 3% per year. Historically in St. Paul, on average rent has only increased by about 1-3% each year. Rent stabilization simply protects tenants of predatory landlords (an ever increasing issue - so many of my friends have experienced this) and it protects families like mine in affordable housing. So that no matter how many luxury apartment buildings are built in my neighborhood, my landlord won't be able to raise my rent by extraordinary amounts to match the neighborhood's new skyrocketing average rental prices. It will allow my family and so many others to keep making St. Paul our home.