

March 25th, 2024

Dear Chair Frentz, Ranking Minority Leader Mathews, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Samantha Pree-Stinson and I am the Director of HR and Organizational Effectiveness at Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia/Renters United for Justice. We are a member led base building non-profit that seeks to transform the housing system in Minneapolis. On behalf of our organization and members, I am writing to you in support of SF4579.

Several years ago, tenants of Pretium managed by Havenbrook now Progress Residential organized to improve their living conditions. That work led to several wins in court through rent abatement and organizing themselves to work with the company to meet state requirements for housing standards, an active lawsuit that AG Ellison is litigating, renovated rental homes for over 75 tenants, and [formal conditions](#) put in place by the City of Minneapolis. NBC covered this work last year and was highlighted on [Lester Holt's NBC Nightly News](#). One of the ongoing issues that has remained unresolved has been utility management. Just announced last week, AG Ellison won the [lawsuit](#) against Pretium due to their practices and violation of MN Housing law.

Large private equity landlords often use 3rd party utility billing companies to manage gas and electricity, removing the ability for tenants to get information about their bills, access free services from the utility companies like energy efficiency assessments, home service plus, and to be able to access energy assistance programming help. If a tenant wants to sign up for a payment plan, make payment arrangements or get help from social services agencies for past due bills they cannot do that when the bills are not in their name. They are not even able to call and get information or itemized bills about their bills.

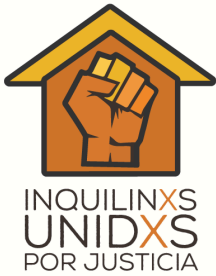
3rd party utility billing for Progress members was enacted without consent, was not a provision in the lease, and led to many tenants not understanding why they were not receiving bills. The billing was also different for many tenants. Some tenants were being billed monthly while others went months without a bill. The utilities were added onto the rent and was due with rent in full- no partial payments. This type of billing and practice led to many families potentially facing eviction for non-payment.

Leasing agreements have a clause that allows for landlords to terminate a lease and evict for non-payment of utilities and not having renter protections and policies regarding utilities management that holds landlords accountable and as best we can keep families in their homes. Tenants need to be

able to manage their households and utility needs without red tape and without fear of losing their home.

We support a strong state policy that protects tenants, their rights and ensures that billing practices are fair, uniform, compliant, and hold landlords accountable. Please consider supporting the move forward with SF 4579.

**Thank you / Gracias,**



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