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City Council Censors Rent Control Hearing to Appease Landlord Lobby

PHILADELPHIA – City Council President Darrell Clarke refused to allow an information hearing on rent control to move forward in response to pressure from the landlord lobby. The hearing was tentatively scheduled to be heard in the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and Homelessness this Wednesday but is now indefinitely postponed. It was intended as an informational hearing that would draw from firsthand experience as well as local and national research on rent control policies to explore the potential benefits of implementing a form of rent stabilization in Philadelphia.

In response to the censorship, the Philadelphia Rent Control coalition released the following statement:

“City Council President Darrell Clarke and the special interests he speaks for are clearly scared of our movement — so much so that they refused to even allow an informational hearing to proceed. For the first time, community members were going to have the opportunity to speak on the record about why Philadelphia renters deserve protections from unfair rent increases and price gouging. And this terrified the landlord lobby, who scrambled to get the hearing canceled.”

“For years, rent prices in Philadelphia have increased at staggering rates while wages have remained stagnant. Meanwhile, corporate landlords are making record profits. It’s never been clearer who in City government is on the side of the people and who is on the side of exploitation and profit. We’re here to tell City Council that the people are watching — and we are the ones who elect you.”

“We demand that our local leaders stand up to corporate interests and the landlord lobby and take real action on the housing crisis. We demand real, democratic debate, not backroom deals and censorship. Our broad, multiracial movement will not rest until we have the opportunity to speak on behalf of renters in Philadelphia.”

Rents in Philadelphia are rising at a staggering pace while wages remain stagnant, threatening the stability and livelihoods of all renters, and disproportionately impacting low-income communities of color. As of 2022, the City of Philadelphia’s average rent was 19% higher than it had been in 2018, while the average hourly wage was only 2.5% higher. The 16.5% gap between the average growth of rents and that of wages in Philadelphia demonstrates that the city is becoming increasingly unaffordable for renters. Rent stabilization measures have the potential to protect tenants from excessive rent increases, address the rapid gentrification of Black and Brown neighborhoods, reduce eviction and homelessness rates, improve rental unit maintenance, and bolster long-term tenancy and neighborhood stability.