

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

March 19, 2018

Edward N. Siskel
Corporation Counsel
City of Chicago Law Department
121 North LaSalle Street, Suite 700
Chicago, IL 60602

Chicago City Council Members
121 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Proposed Ordinance O2018-89 and the City of Chicago's Chronic Illegal Activity Premises Ordinance

Dear Corporation Counsel Siskel and Members of the City Council:

As public interest organizations that advocate on behalf of survivors of domestic and sexual violence, crime victims, individuals with disabilities, tenants, and others likely to need to contact emergency services, we are writing to urge the repeal of the City's "chronic illegal activity premises ordinance" (Section 8-4-087 of the Municipal Code of Chicago). Proposed Ordinance O2018-89 does not go far enough to protect tenants. No one should fear punishment for calling the police.

Crime-free and nuisance property ordinances punish tenants for reporting crimes. With minor exceptions, Chicago's ordinance imposes penalties when 3 or more calls for police services that result in a case report are made regarding a property within 90 days. This pressures landlords to evict tenants unfairly for making calls to police, leaving victims with the impossible choice between suffering silently or risking homelessness because they called the police too many times.

Chicago's ordinance is not an effective public safety tool. By linking its enforcement to the number of calls for police services – which can lead to fines and evictions – it deters crime victims and their neighbors from contacting the police when they need help, and encourages the displacement of vulnerable individuals from their homes. For these reasons, ordinances like this actually undermine public safety.

Nuisance ordinances place survivors of domestic violence and individuals with disabilities at heightened risk of harm. These individuals are disproportionately likely to need assistance from police or emergency services that could be labeled as "criminal activity" on the property. Because police calls related to domestic violence incidents and disabilities are often not clearly identified, it is not an effective solution to enact narrow carve-outs like those in Proposed Ordinance O2018-89. The City should never use the number of 911 calls to trigger penalties on landlords – which pressures landlords to evict or take other punitive action against tenants.

No one should be afraid to call the police when they need help. In order to truly protect crime victims and keep our communities safe, we urge the City not to take a half step in enacting these carve-outs. The risk of harm to our communities is too great to leave this ordinance in place. We urge the City to repeal it entirely.

Sincerely,

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