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LA City Controller Kenneth Mejia Announces New Housing Audit on the Implementation of the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance (TAHO)

LA City Controller Kenneth Mejia announced today that the Controller's Office will be starting a new audit investigating the implementation of the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance (TAHO).

In June 2021, the City adopted Ordinance 187109 (known as the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance or TAHO), which went into effect in August 2021. TAHO applies to all residential units in the City and prohibits landlords from harassing tenants with actions such as removing housing services, withholding repairs, or refusing to accept payments. TAHO is intended to serve as a safeguard against landlords who take adverse actions with the ultimate intention of forcing tenants to "voluntarily" move out from the low-cost housing unit, thereby enabling the landlord to list the newly-available unit at market-rate rents.

In addition to tenant protections, TAHO provided remedies for aggrieved tenants to pursue a private right of action in court as a civil matter. However, the language of the ordinance does not guarantee an aggrieved tenant reimbursement of their attorney's fees in prevailing cases. As a result, low-income tenants facing harassment may face difficulty finding legal representation.

The Los Angeles Housing Department (LAHD) is the primary department responsible for preserving and protecting affordable housing throughout the City. The Department reported that from the period of August 2021 through October 2022, LAHD's Investigations and Enforcement Unit received approximately 12,550 total complaint filings, of which 3,700 cases were complaint filings alleging tenant harassment. In November 2022, LAHD reported that it had begun referring confirmed cases of tenant harassment to the City Attorney's Office. However, at that point, the City Attorney had not yet filed any TAHO-related civil actions against landlords. The lack of cases accepted and prosecuted by the City Attorney and the lack of meaningful private litigation suggests that TAHO is not functioning as intended by City Council or envisioned by the City and tenants' rights advocates.

The primary objective of this audit is to evaluate the effectiveness of LAHD's implementation of TAHO.

Specifically, the project would seek to answer the following questions:

- **Has TAHO resulted in improved protections for tenants facing harassment by landlords?**
- **How many TAHO complaints have been received, and how are those complaints processed and reviewed?**
- **What processes are in place to investigate alleged acts of harassment against tenants inhabiting affordable housing units?**
- **What processes are in place to enforce compliance with TAHO and related housing laws when property owners are found to be harassing tenants?**
- **What processes are in place to escalate verified TAHO complaints to the City Attorney's Office?**
- **What are the barriers LAHD is encountering when attempting to enforce TAHO?**
- **How does LAHD measure the success of TAHO in protecting tenants from harassment?**
- **How does the City compare to other California cities with anti-harassment laws?**

Los Angeles has one of the highest costs of living in the country and a majority of residents live in rental housing. Rent-burdened Angelenos continue to face rising rents and a dwindling supply of affordable housing. **As a result, it is critical that Angelenos currently inhabiting affordable or rent-controlled housing are protected from harassment and other harmful actions by their landlords.**

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Audits previously announced (in-progress):

- *LAPD Helicopters*
- *Unarmed Response*
- *Interim Housing Data*
- *Pathways to Permanent Housing*

Housing tools:

- *Eviction notices map: evictions.lacontroller.io*
- *Affordable housing map: housingcovenants.lacontroller.io*