



HOUSING JUSTICE LEAGUE NEWSLETTER

March 2023

HOUSING UNDER THE GOLD DOME

by Taylor

Back in early January, another edition of the Georgia General Assembly kicked off under the Gold Dome in downtown Atlanta. Over the course of the first two months of the 2023 legislative session, a number of housing-related bills were introduced by legislators from both parties. In an effort to connect Housing Justice League's ongoing local organizing work with state-level policy, the policy working group has been monitoring this year's legislative session and advocating for (and against) a number of these bills in order to advance a housing justice agenda across the state of Georgia.

After the first round of bills dropped in mid-February, we initially prioritized a handful of bills related to HJL's organizational priorities, while calling out a number of others of interest. Of all these bills, only three survived Crossover Day on March 6th, the day by which all bills must have passed out of one chamber of the legislature or the other if they are to continue being considered for the remainder of the legislative session.

House Bill 404 – also known as the “Safe at Home Act” – was introduced by Republican representatives in

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After outcry from HJL and other housing advocates, we were successful in getting [HB 404's] co-sponsors to heed (some, though not all) of our warnings and remove the provisions about expedited evictions.



HJL joins Georgia ACT's Housing Day the Capitol (source: SaportaReport)

response to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's "Dangerous Dwellings" investigation from last summer, which showed how Georgia's complete lack of tenant protections were allowing landlords to run roughshod over those who rent from them. HB404 included some positive codification of tenant protections common in other states, but also problematic provisions that would have made some evictions even quicker than they already are. After outcry from HJL and other housing advocates, we were successful in getting the bill's co-sponsors to heed (some, though not all) of our warnings and remove the provisions about expedited evictions. After these amendments, HB404 passed out of the House by a unanimous 168-0 vote and has moved on to the State Senate for consideration in these final weeks of the legislative session. Given the changes to the bill, HJL is happy to

support its passage, though we maintain some skepticism that HB404 is fully up to the task of protecting Georgia's most vulnerable renters. Nonetheless, we are hopeful that this is just the first step in continuing to codify protections for Georgia's tenants.

The other bills still under consideration are House Bill 514, the "Housing Regulation Transparency Act," which would preempt local government attempts to rein in so-called 'build-to-rent' (BTR) subdivisions owned by massive corporate landlords, and Senate Bill 62, which would force local governments to take an even more draconian approach to policing the homeless in public spaces. Though both of these bills fall somewhat outside the core mission of HJL and the policy working group, we stand opposed to both of these bills as they continue to be considered by the legislature because of the





Forest Cove Apartments, owned and managed by Millennia. Credit: WABE

precedents they set for preempting and dictating the housing policies available to local governments.

Noticeably absent from this list of bills still under consideration are SB125 or HB534, companion bills that would have repealed Georgia's nearly 40-year-old statewide ban on rent control. While it's unsurprising that neither of these bills were able to get a hearing in a Republican-controlled legislature where nearly 25% of the members are landlords themselves, we remain disappointed by the lack of support these bills were able to garner among ostensibly progressive Democrats. Together, these two bills only managed a total of five co-sponsors among the 236 total members of the state legislature. Despite the uphill battle we face in repealing Georgia's ban on rent control, HJL stands firm in our commitment to rent control as a policy solution and we look

forward to continuing our partnership with the Georgia For All Rent Stabilization Coalition and other organizations in fighting for housing justice for low-income tenants across Atlanta and the state of Georgia in future legislative sessions.

MILLENNIA RESISTANCE CAMPAIGN CALLS FOR NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION ON APRIL 1ST

by Millenia Resistance Campaign

If you live in the south, the midwest, or the northeast, it is likely that there is a Millennia complex in your area. In Atlanta, Millennia is most infamous for being the owner and property manager of Forest Cove Apartments, where residents have been forced to move out to await dire repairs needed to bring the property back to an acceptable condition. Millennia has dragged their feet on this much needed development,

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Forest Cove residents speak to the Atlanta Housing Commission to talk about Millennia's failures and their dissatisfaction with the relocation process

and tenants have been waiting for over a year for these repairs to be completed.

Millennia Housing Management owns and manages over 30,000 units across 26 states. Every year, it receives hundreds of millions of dollars in HUD subsidies to house seniors, low-income families, and people with disabilities. Despite this ample funding, Millennia has a pattern of failing to maintain safe and sanitary living conditions across its portfolio. Tenants have been displaced, seriously injured, and killed as a result of Millennia's refusal to correct critical issues. In 2022 alone, eleven Millennia complexes made the news for their conditions.

Tenants report that when Millennia does make repairs, they are often shoddy and poorly executed. Millennia tenants who attempt to organize are frequently

harassed by management or threatened with eviction.

We believe that the Millennia complexes that have received media attention are just the tip of a very large iceberg. For every tenant that contacts the news or seeks support from advocacy organizations, there are many more who do not speak up about what they are experiencing. It is time for Millennia to receive long-overdue national exposure and face consequences for putting tenant lives at risk.

The Millennia Resistance Campaign is organizing a day of action on April 1st, 2023, and we are calling on our allies to help by:

- Calling and/or emailing HUD to lift up our demands.
- Canvassing a Millennia complex in your area with our organizing toolkit.



- Contacting your elected officials and putting Millennia on their radar.
- Amplifying the campaign on social media through @ResistMillennia on Twitter and @MillenniaResistance on Instagram
- Signing and sharing our petition at tinyurl.com/HoldMillenniaAccountable
- Attending an in-person action if one is happening near you. We are currently planning actions in Atlanta, GA and Memphis, TN. The details of each action will be sent out very soon.

If you can commit to participate, would like a copy of our organizing toolkit, or want to find Millennia complexes near you, please email MillenniaResistance@gmail.com.

This fight is not just about achieving justice for Millennia tenants— it is about every negligent landlord that is enabled by HUD's weak oversight.

We hope you can join us on April 1st!

HJL BOARD MEMBER RHONDA ORGANIZERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA FOR A DISCUSSION OF HOUSING STRUGGLES

by Rhonda, Graham

On Sunday, March 5th, the Pan-Africanist Solidarity Collective hosted a virtual session entitled "Connecting Housing Struggles: Tenant Organizing Across the Diaspora," which provided updates on struggles for housing justice from countries around the world, including Namibia, South Africa, and the United States. Representing Atlanta was HJL board member and tenant leader Rhonda Robinson. She spoke about Housing Justice League's work to organize tenants' associations, educate tenants on their rights, repeal Georgia's ban on rent control, and get a right to legal representation for tenants facing eviction.

The Pan-African Activist Solidarity Collective began as a solidarity effort with the #EndSARS movement, joining together grassroots organizers in Nigeria with organizers working within Black liberation struggles around the world. Of the discussion, Rhonda said, "I just want people to be aware of this connection and

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-Rhonda, HJL Board Member

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursdays at 6:30 PM: Tenant Working Group Meetings

The Tenant Working Group meets virtually every Thursday at 6:30 PM to discuss current tenants' associations and tenant organizing in general. Please email alison@housingjusticeleague.org to be added to the WhatsApp group and receive the Zoom Link

Wednesdays at 5 PM: Eviction Defense Working Group Meetings

The Eviction Defense Working Group meets virtually every Wednesday at 5:00 PM to discuss efforts to prevent eviction and educate tenants on their rights. Please email evictiondefense@housingjusticeleague.org to be added to the Slack channel and receive the Zoom link.

Every other Tuesday at 6:30 PM: Policy Working Group Meetings

The Policy Working Group meets biweekly on Tuesdays at 6:30 PM to discuss current policy and to write new policy to propose to the city and the state. Please email

policy@housingjusticeleague.org to receive the Zoom link.

Thursday, March 23rd at 6:30 PM:

The Georgia For All Coalition for Rent Stabilization will be hosting a tenant panel on Thursday, March 23rd at 6:30 PM on Zoom. Please email contact@georgiaforallcoalition.org for the registration link!

Saturday, April 1st:

The Millennial Resistance campaign will be hosting a national day of action to hold Millennials accountable, and there will be in-person events in both Atlanta and Memphis! Please email MillennialResistance@gmail.com for more details.

