

At Mayor Justin Bibb's insistence, Cleveland City Council passes anti-eviction ordinance co-sponsored

Written by Kathy

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Pictured are Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb and Ward 12 Councilwoman Rebecca Maurer
Clevelandurbannews.com and Kathywraycolemanonlineblog.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio— Cleveland City Council at its regular meeting on Wednesday unanimously passed a Pay to Stay ordinance that gives housing renters in the city more rights and more stability.

Under Pay to Stay, if a tenant is summoned to court for an eviction for non-payment of rent, he or she can stop the proceeding if the full amount of rent owed is paid, plus any late fees. Previously landlords could secure evictions for non-payment of rent after an eviction filing in Cleveland Municipal Housing Court, even if the tenant comes up with the money owed during the eviction proceeding. Housing evictions for other justifiable reasons are not impacted. Under Ohio law, a tenant can be evicted for being just one day late or one dollar short on rent and Ohio is one of a handful of states that allows a tenant to be evicted in such a manner, though other legal requirements such as proper notice and non-discriminatory actions must also be followed. The city's new ordinance would override the mandate for eviction for being "a day late and a dollar short," the city's mayor said in a press release on Wednesday after the city council, led by Council President Blaine Griffin, passed the precedent setting ordinance.

"Today, we took a big step toward housing justice and promoting equity in the City of Cleveland," said Mayor Justin M. Bibb, who took office in January and was behind pushing the city council to adopt the ordinance. "And we won't stop here. I am grateful to our director of

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building and housing, Sally Martin, city council, and all the community partners for their diligence and hard work on this critical legislation."

Martin said that Ohio is not doing enough to protect tenants rights statewide.

"Simply put, the state should be better protecting tenants but that is not happening in Ohio," said Martin. "This is common sense protection for renters in the City of Cleveland and we are thrilled to see it cross the finish line."

City Council is becoming more progressive on housing issues as its membership changes and young new council persons are getting elected, "This is another layer that we can use to support our residents and protect their housing." said Ward 12 Councilwoman Rebecca Maurer, a licensed attorney and co-sponsor of the legislation and a westside councilwoman who won office last year by upsetting longtime councilman Anthony Brancatelli. "We are working closely with the Legal Aid Society, Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless and others to ensure that the education component of this ordinance happens and that renters know this defense is available to them."

Cleveland Municipal

Housing Court Judge W. Mona' Scott, whose housing court is part of Cleveland Municipal Court but operates independently of it as to its budget, personnel, and some other matters, could not be reached for comment. Judge Scott is Black, and so are Councilman Griffin and Mayor Bibb, 35.

Pay to Stay

provides a pathway for tenants who tender late rent to stay in their homes and is a tangible policy tool that protects renters, the mayor say, particularly those disproportionately impacted by evictions, homelessness, and entrenched structural and economic inequities.

As one of the poorest big cities in America by some standards, Cleveland is facing an eviction crisis, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to an Eviction Study undertaken by the city, some 9,000 evictions are filed each year about 80 percent of them are for non-payment of rent. And in most cases tenants missed one or two rent payments, the study says.

The mayor said Wednesday that his office will be partnering with city council and organizations across the city to launch an education campaign to ensure both tenants and landlords understand the ordinance, their rights, and how to navigate the process.

Advocates for the homeless say Cleveland's eviction process is troublesome at best "Not only are evictions a leading cause of homelessness, but studies show that children changing schools as a result of eviction experience declines in educational achievement," said Molly Martin, Director of Strategic Initiatives at Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless. "This ordinance is an important step to ensure fairness in the eviction process and to call for more rights that will protect renters in our community."

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The Black community, and not just westsiders and area anti-homeless organizations led by Whites, should be at the table relative to any outreach initiatives around the ordinance, Black Cleveland activists have said.

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We interviewed former president Barack Obama one-on-one when he was campaigning for president. As to the Obama interview,

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