

December 3 2010
Board of Supervisors
Santa Barbara County

Isla Vista Tenants Union
6550 Pardall Road, Unit B
Goleta, CA 93117

Re: Ordinance 4444

Dear Board of Supervisors,

My name is Sara Vandenberg and I am Chair of Isla Vista Tenants Union. I wanted to thank the board in advance for both their time, as well as their careful consideration of this matter that greatly impacts our community.

Following the mass eviction in the summer of 1998 of over thirty Chicano/Latino families in the Colonial, Balboa and Cortez apartments on El Colegio Road, students and families organized and collectively resisted the unjust displacement of members of our Isla Vista community. Unfortunately, it was, and still is common and legal in Isla Vista for property owners to evict long-term family tenants en masse in order to renovate the property, increase rent prices and advertise the new units as luxury housing for UCSB and SBCC students.

In 1999, Familias y Estudiantes Unidos was founded with a grant from the Fund for Santa Barbara to fight against similar occurrences that might present themselves in the future. Later that year, in an effort to secure funding and physical space for the organization, the Isla Vista Tenants Union was created under the auspices of UCSB Associated Students. Once more, in August 2006, approximately 55 families of the Cedarwood Apartments were suddenly evicted by new owners of the complex, Conquest Student Housing, who renovated, raised the rent, and leased the new units to a more lucrative demographic: students. Again, the community rallied and protested this unfair and inhumane displacement of members who had called Cedarwood home for nearly a decade.

Ordinance 4444 provides much needed legal and proactive protection for renters in a volatile housing market where mass evictions serve as a convenient remedy to remodel, raise rent and change the demographic of renters. In the spirit of our mission, which states, "We believe people should be able to live without suffering discrimination, retaliation, or living with fear of eviction. We recognize the diversity of our community and we strive to meet the different needs of our members while uniting our common interests as tenants," Isla Vista Tenants Union fully supports the changes to Ordinance 4444 as communicated by the Rental Housing Roundtable and urges the board to make the necessary changes to ensure our residents have a fair process should they be evicted through no fault of their own.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sara Vandenberg
Chair of Isla Vista Tenants Union 2010-2011