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Hon. Charlie Justice
Chairman, Pinellas County Commission
315 Court Street
Clearwater, FL 33756

Dear Chairman Justice,

On behalf of over 10,000 members of the Pinellas REALTOR® Organization (PRO), we are writing you today regarding the “Tenant Bill of Rights” ordinance. We are thankful for the commission’s action to defer the issue until August 2nd and ask that the county adopt a program the same as City of St. Petersburg. After more than two years of advocacy, community outreach, and compromise the City of St. Petersburg enacted a “Tenants Bill of Rights” that works for both tenants and landlords. Expanding that ordinance across the county makes sense for continuity for all involved.

Our association is concerned with the aspects of the ordinance referencing financial regulations and how that would affect “mom and pop” owners, as well as potential tenants. For decades both renters and landlords have operated under the same guidelines whether the property was in Lealman or Disston Heights. While we understand that system has changed in many municipalities, we hope that our county can keep consistency, so all parties involved have a reasonable expectation when entering into a lease. Housing is a necessity, and often renters are on the brink of homelessness or owners are weeks from defaulting on their property. We do not have an ideal system but adding two separate bureaucracies to an already stressful process is unnecessary.

The opt-in option for municipalities is an excellent option for the Pinellas County ordinance, but we are not confident St. Petersburg would opt-in to a different Pinellas ordinance. That is why we ask that the Pinellas County ordinance mirror the St. Petersburg ordinance with the addition of the opt-in option. The county would have reforms to the system and uniformity for both renters and owners.

Thank you for your consideration on this issue. Our recommendation comes with the utmost respect for your service to our community. If you have any questions about our position, please contact our Vice President of Public Affairs Joe Farrell.

Sincerely,

Manuela Hendrickson
2022 President of the Board

Sincerely,

David B. Bennett
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Hon. Janet Long, Hon. Dave Eggers, Hon. Pat Gerard, Hon. Rene Flowers, Hon. Kathleen Peters, Hon. Karen Seel, Barry Burton, Carol Stricklin, Evan Johnson, Tom Almonte

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