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Community Group Sues The City of Huntington Park For Failure to Comply with State Housing and Environmental Justice Laws

City's legal violations leave residents vulnerable during the pandemic

(Los Angeles, CA) On March 15, Huntington Park resident Ramona Quezada and environmental justice organization Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) filed a lawsuit against the City of Huntington Park for its longstanding failure to follow state laws that are designed to ensure adequate and affordable housing. CBE has witnessed the intersection of housing and environmental justice issues for decades and is working to ensure these same communities are not displaced or forced into homelessness or overcrowded housing conditions due to unaffordability and gentrification. Ramona and CBE are represented by Disability Rights California and Public Interest Law Project.

“I joined this lawsuit because I want justice. I see families living on the street and it isn’t right,” said Ramona Quezada, a Huntington Park resident who is one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

For decades, the City of Huntington Park has not adequately planned for housing needs of its community, and has failed to adopt a legally compliant Housing Element, the state-mandated plan that analyzes a community’s housing needs and commits to actions to address those needs. In 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom [singled out the city](#) for its lack of an adequate housing element. In [response](#), the City claimed to be working on a plan that would have them meet that state requirement, but it still has not adopted a Housing Element that meets the requirements of state law. Huntington Park’s failure to address these issues left residents in overcrowded, unhealthy, and unaffordable housing.

“Huntington Park’s flouting of state affordable planning and anti-discrimination law is among the most egregious in California. The City must be held accountable,” says Valerie Feldman, an attorney with the Public Interest Law Project.

Under state law, the City must identify and plan to remove barriers to housing for people with disabilities, people who are unhoused, and the elderly. It must also plan through its Environmental Justice Element to reduce the unique health risks in disadvantaged communities, an especially critical task in Huntington Park, which faces some of the highest pollution risks of any city in California. These plans lay the groundwork for the City’s development. Without them, the City will continue to face low vacancy rates, high housing costs, and the unmitigated effects of industrial waste.

“If a city refuses to create the conditions that lead to housing for all members of its community – people who are disabled, families, older residents – we will not get out of our housing crisis. Huntington Park needs to do its part,” says Navneet Grewal, an attorney with Disability Rights California.

"Affordable housing brings us closer to community stability. This lawsuit highlights the intersections of housing and environmental justice. CBE's members who live in Huntington Park are being harmed by the City’s discriminatory actions, we hope this lawsuit moves the City closer to a future the community deserves,” says Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Executive Director, Communities for A Better Environment.

The final complaint for the lawsuit can be found [here](#).

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) is one of the preeminent environmental justice organizations in the nation. The mission of CBE is to build people’s power in California’s low-income communities of color to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution by building green, healthy, and sustainable communities and environments. <http://www.cbecal.org/>

Disability Rights California (DRC) is the agency designated under federal law to protect and advocate for the rights of Californians with disabilities. The mission of DRC is to advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, and choices for all people with disabilities. For more information visit: <https://www.disabilityrightsca.org>.

Public Interest Law Project (PILP) provides crucial litigation and advocacy support to local legal services and public interest programs throughout California. Our policy and legal work has centered on housing and community development, public benefits, health, welfare, and civil, consumer, and economic rights since 1996. For more information visit: <https://www.pilpca.org>

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