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Midway Chamber of Commerce opposes Saint Paul rent control ballot question

The Midway Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has voted to oppose the Saint Paul rent control ballot question. The Midway Chamber agrees that there is an unacceptable shortage of affordable housing within the City of St. Paul and that measures are needed to encourage more housing availability and stability. The proposed ordinance on the November ballot will not only fail to address the need for more affordable housing in the City—we firmly believe it will make the situation dramatically worse.

If passed the new law would have drastic unintended consequences and negatively impact the residents it claims it will help. It will reduce the supply of affordable housing by driving away investment in new housing and deter additional investment and preservation of existing rental housing within the City.

The absence of an exemption for new housing projects from the scope of the proposed ordinance is particularly onerous and will drive away new investment in housing. In turn, the disincentive to invest in new housing will greatly reduce property tax revenue generated for the City, thus adding to the City's already stressed financial health.

In addition to reducing the supply of affordable rental housing in St. Paul, the rent control measure will also decrease the quality of rental property in St. Paul as property owners will not have the resources to fund depreciation, maintenance, and repairs on rental property.

Directing public policies through the blunt instrument of a ballot measure is never a good way to address complex societal problems and it undercuts the authority of the City's elected leaders to legislate thoughtful policies.

Therefore, the Midway Chamber stands in opposition to the rent control ballot measure and urges St. Paul City voters to reject the Rent Control measure. Furthermore, the Midway Chamber calls on the Mayor and the City Council to work on a more thoughtful approach to addressing this complex crisis. The Midway Chamber is committed to advocating for an economy in which more residents, nonprofits and businesses thrive, and we stand ready to partner with all stakeholders to fight for a long-term solution that lifts all boats.