Dear FHFA,

I am currently living in an apartment complex owned by MAA. From 2020 to 2023, my rent has been hiked by more than 53%, which is triple the median U.S. national rent increase during the same time period (17.70%). In renewing our lease in 2022 alone our rent increased by 27%! (When discussing this extreme increase with the property leasing manager, I was told “We [the leasing entity] have a responsibility to our shareholders.” Imagine going in for a medical procedure and just before the anesthesia kicks in your surgeon turns to you and says, “We have a responsibility to our shareholders.” How would you feel?

This severe increase led my partner and I both to seek additional income despite my holding a doctorate degree and working with a federal institution. Additionally, we were required to substantially cut back on groceries and all but eliminate dining out. We cannot yet purchase our first home and these extortionate rent increases continue to keep doing so further and further out of reach.

It is rather unbelievable and disappointing that the federal government has not acted appropriately to protect us from these predatory profiteering practices. A meaningful first step would involve establishing rent regulations in the form of federally limits in the amount that rents can be increased year-over-year. This would serve to protect tenants from and limit abusive rent hikes. Beyond this, the federal government has a responsibility to prevent discrimination based on the one’s source of income (e.g., federal housing assistance), race, ability, family composition, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration, legal history, credit score, and rental history. Further, landlords should be required to include necessary identification information (e.g., DBA title, company/individual name, and contact information) in a formal federal registry to ensure all tenants have the means by which to communicate with them. Landlords must also be required to use standardized and clearly defined leases free of abusive terms. And finally, tenants deserve to have a federally protected and upheld right to form tenants’ unions or resident councils free from fear of retaliation from the landlord or managing agent.

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