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Mike Leyba (617) 934-8549, mleyba@clvu.org
Communications Coordinator, City Life/Vida Urbana

Darnell Johnson (617) 858-6116, darnell@righttothecity.org
Boston Coordinator, Right to the City Alliance

Boston Tenants Call out Corporate Landlords, Public Policy
Over 150 Renters and Residents Condemn Mass Displacement for Corporate Greed

Boston– Boston is quickly becoming unaffordable for most renters, according to local housing advocacy groups, attorneys, and researchers. Boston City Councilor Tito Jackson teamed up with local nonprofit organizations City Life/Vida Urbana, Chinese Progressive Association, and national alliance Right to the City to expose this affordability crisis, and explore the role of corporate landlords and investors on neighborhood instability and displacement. At the packed hearing, with Concillors Baker, Jackson, Pressley, Zakim, and O’Malley in attendance, community organizations exposed the egregious practices of landlords trying to maximize private profit over the public need for stable housing and communities.

At the packed public hearing, dozens of former homeowners and tenants called out landlords that are using abusive, sometimes illegal tactics to get low-income people out of buildings. Most singled out was Allston-based landlord City Realty Group, which operates under over approximately 72 LLCs and owns over 600 units within the greater Boston area. One such example of the testimonies heard at the hearing came from Lucky Omorodian, who purchased his Hyde Park home at the peak of the bubble in 2008 and entered foreclosure after being laid off at work. Within several months, Omorodian was back on his feet, and made an offer to purchase his home back with financing. Instead, the bank chose to sell to City Realty Group under one of dozens of LLCs that the company regularly uses. Within months, Omorodian was facing rent increases, even though there was a lack of maintenance and the building needed repairs. Omorodian is awaiting a jury trial with City Realty Group, alleging they illegally seized over \$10,000 worth of property out of a locked storage area. “What City Realty has done to me and my family is unfair. I just want City Realty to negotiate with their tenants and charge a fair rent because that’s what we as a city need.”

Mr. Omorodian and countless others are facing a no-fault eviction, the legal ‘tool of choice’ for landlords looking to displace their tenants. City law currently allows landlords to evict a tenant ‘no-fault.’ Many of the people testifying at the hearing have faced no-fault evictions, and City Realty Group would not negotiate with them. “Why did it take three community organization, two city councillors, two major public actions, countless press reports to get City Realty to come in and negotiate?” presses City Life/Vida Urbana organizer Maria Christina Blanco. “We look forward to having a continuation of the investigation that has started here tonight.”. Proponents of a just-cause eviction law say that could be one of many solutions to the problem of mass displacement.

Activists in Boston are saying that twenty years after the loss of rent control in the Boston area, corporate landlords such as City Realty Group are maximizing corporate profit over public good. Low and middle income renters are being displaced, while the costs of unnecessary eviction and

homelessness are being shifted onto local governments and communities. “It is far more profitable to build million-dollar condos than to create a well-rounded city” said Mike Leyba of City Life/Vida Urbana, “and as long as this is the case, our city’s people lose.”

According to UMass Professor Emeritus Michael Stone, two-thirds of residents in the City of Boston are renters. Half of all renters in the city pay over 30% of their income to rent (a national affordability standard), and over half of renters are people of color.

About City Life/Vida Urbana: City Life/Vida Urbana is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization based in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. For over forty years, it has organized and advocated for tenants and homeowners facing unjust displacement. For more information, visit www.clvu.org/press_room

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