

August 28, 2018

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception
400 Michigan Ave NE
Washington, D.C. 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

We are the tenants of 636 Girard St. N.E., 628 Girard St. N.E., 1265 Raum St. N.E, and 1364 Bryant St. N.E. in Washington, D.C., and we are writing to you about the sale of our properties, which were donated to your institution upon the death of our late landlord, Joann Doyle. We are a multinational group of working class residents and families that have lived in our 4-unit buildings for many years - some of us for decades. If the Buyers of our properties with whom you have entered agreements, by law, are allowed to eliminate rent control, we will be forced out of our homes and displaced as a direct result of the sales, because we are unable to afford higher rents.

In the rapidly gentrifying city of Washington, D.C., many of our neighbors have been displaced or are at risk of displacement, such as at Brookland Manor, where tenants continue to fight for their right to affordable housing. We do not want to fall victim to an economic policy and trend of mass displacement and unaffordable development, which puts the financial interests of developers and corporations over our livelihoods.

Unfortunately, for two of our buildings, the time for exercising our TOPA (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act) rights has expired, so they are at immediate risk. The other two buildings are in the process of attempting to use their TOPA rights to secure future affordability. However, this attempt will be close to impossible because options for four unit buildings looking to find non-profit buyers or negotiate with the contract purchaser through TOPA, are so deeply limited.

We understand that the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception is an institution of faith built on values of compassion, rights and dignity for all. The Catholic tradition has long respected housing as essential to human rights and dignity. If our buildings are made unaffordable after you sell them, the direct result would be our displacement.

Due to the imminent time frame of our potential displacement, we are making a public appeal to the Basilica, to give immediate attention to our impending housing situation. We ask you to meet and work with us as tenants of Northeast Washington, D.C., and to craft a solution that protects

the affordability and future of our homes, and we respectfully call on the Catholic Church to take action against the wave of displacement that has already hurt the lives of so many of us in this neighborhood, and across the entire city. If we were to be displaced, the Basilica have contributed to the structural violence and inequality that plagues our society, and this would be contrary to the values and teachings that your institution stands for.

Pope Francis said, at his speech in Washington, D.C. at St. Patrick's on September 24, 2015, "We can find no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for lack of housing." As early as March 24, 1988, a statement issued by the Administrative Board of the U.S. Catholic Conference, states:

The Church has traditionally viewed housing, not as a commodity, but as a basic human right. ... As Pope John Paul II said ... 'A house is much more than a roof over one's head.' It is 'a place where a person creates and lives out his or her life.' The right to housing is a consistent theme in our teaching and is found in the Church's *Charter of the Rights of the Family*. We believe society has the responsibility to protect these rights, and the denial of housing to so many constitutes a terrible injustice.

As long-time tenants, families, and residents of the neighborhood and the city, some of whom are connected to Catholic institutions, we object to the Basilica's potential participation in gentrification and displacement. We ask the Church to respect the beliefs and teachings it espouses, and to meet and speak with the tenants of our buildings, along with our attorneys and support team, Justice First and LinkUp, and our technical assistants at Housing Counseling Services, to identify a way forward that takes our basic human right to housing into account.

We ask all those in solidarity with our cause to protect our homes and families from displacement by the financial decisions of the Basilica of the National Shrine of Immaculate Conception, to circulate and sign on to this letter.

Sincerely,

The 636 Girard St. N.E. Tenants Association

Tenants of 628 Girard St. NE

Tenants of 1265 Raum St. NE

Tenants of 1364 Bryant St. NE