



# Why Does St. Paul Need Just Cause Notice?

Just Cause Notice ordinances are an important policy tool to prevent displacement and promote tenant stability, especially in neighborhoods where rents are rising, vacancies are low, and landlords may seek to evict or non-renew existing tenants to upscale their buildings and attract wealthier renters at higher prices. These ordinances also protect tenants who assert their legal right to safe and healthy housing from retaliatory displacement, as well as protect them from discriminatory or arbitrary terminations that too many renters of color still face. In concert with other anti-displacement strategies, just cause policies can help slow the processes of gentrification that can displace entire neighborhoods in a matter of years – so that all residents, regardless of race or income, can stay and benefit from reinvestment and growth.

**What problem is just cause notice even trying to solve?**

People think that tenants only lose their homes during a formal eviction process. But informal evictions - where someone is forced to leave their home on short notice when a lease isn't renewed - can account for twice as much displacement as the formal, legal eviction process. Right now, a tenant can be forced to leave within 30 days without any idea of why it happened, creating even greater instability. Just cause notice simply requires that a tenant is notified of the reason why their lease is not renewed. The reason must be included in the city's list of just causes.

**Won't this prevent landlords from kicking out bad tenants?**

If a tenant is not doing anything wrong, they should not be forced to leave their home. If they are doing something wrong that is spelled out in their lease, such as not paying rent or engaging in criminal activity, they can still be evicted or asked to leave at the end of that lease.

**Won't just cause notice hurt other good tenants?**

Just cause notice does not impact the formal eviction process for situations that are more imminently dangerous and does not impair a landlord's duty to maintain a safe place for people to call home. If a tenant is causing significant or dangerous problems for other tenants in the building, it would be a rationale for either an eviction action or would be just cause for a nonrenewal of the lease agreement at the end of the tenancy.

**How is just cause a racial justice issue?**

Due to generations of policies that have intentionally excluded them from homeownership, renters are disproportionately people of color and indigenous peoples. For instance, 83% of African-American households in St. Paul are renters, compared to 41% of White households. In addition, more than half of our renter households of color earn 30% or less of the Area Median Income, resulting in over 50% being housing cost burdened.

**Won't a landlord just jack up rent to push the tenant out?**

Tenants already face arbitrary and extreme rent increases from bad actors in our housing system. Just cause notice is not designed to single-handedly solve that issue. It's meant to reduce displacement and improve housing stability. Retaliatory rent increases are also illegal! If rents are still being raised dramatically as a way to force residents out of their home, it's likely the city needs to pursue policies even more aggressive than just cause notice, such as rent stabilization.

**Will just cause add additional burdens and costs for landlords?**

It isn't too much to ask for a landlord to document wrongdoing if the result is someone losing their home. In addition, it does not cost any money for a landlord to provide the reason for not renewing a lease. Just cause notice is fundamentally about shifting the burden of proof onto landlords, who already wield tremendous discretionary power over the housing future of a tenant. Tenants deserve protection against that inherent power imbalance, and just cause notice helps rectify that by simply asking landlords to provide clear documentation of a just cause for termination. Just like restaurant owners, landlords operate a business and have to follow regulations.

**Isn't just cause notice forcing landlords into a contract?**

Just cause notice does not force anyone to continue renting to a tenant. It simply requires that they provide the reason for non-renewing a tenant's lease.

**Is there any data showing this policy is effective?**

Yes, 16 cities and three states have just cause notice policies, including Seattle, Oakland, San Diego, Berkeley, New York City, Oregon, New Hampshire and New Jersey. In Minnesota, many for-profit and non-profit landlords are already covered by just cause requirements, including owners of legally-binding affordable housing and manufactured home parks. Study of cities in California that have had Just Cause policies for more than a decade show that people being displaced from their homes has dropped by as much as 80 percent, helping to increase housing stability significantly.



**Housing Equity Now St. Paul (HENS)** is coalition of groups representing St. Paul neighborhoods and constituents, focused on housing justice and rooted in community, specifically in low-wealth communities of color most affected by economic inequality, including Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Jewish Community Action, West Side Community Organization, Southeast Community Organization, The Alliance, and Housing Justice Center. This fact sheet was compiled with the assistance from HOME Line and the office of St. Paul Ward 4 City Councilmember Mitra Jalali. **Learn more at [wso.org/hens](https://wso.org/hens)**