



Seniors present solutions on housing affordability at Brevard County Legislature Hearing

Brevard residents that live in manufactured home communities call attention to excessive rent increases and community maintenance issues wrought by the predatory land speculator-ownership of their communities

Press Statement:

On Jan 11, from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m., a seven-member Brevard County delegation to the Florida Legislature will host a community forum to discuss community issues. Residents from mobile home communities across Titusville, [Parakeet Communities](#) & [Leasco Management](#) will be drawing attention to the uninhabitable and unaffordable living conditions they now face at the hands of their communities' corporate owners. Some testimony excerpts that will be shared include the following:

Donna Lessard:

"I live in Whispering Pines Manufactured Home Community in Titusville, FL. I moved here because I could not keep up with the rising costs of rent in California after I had been deemed disabled. I chose to live in a mobile home community because, after much research, I realized they were an affordable choice of housing for someone on a fixed income. I have pulmonary hypertension, COPD, recurring blood clots, spinal issues, and congestive heart failure. I was given minimal time to live out my life, and living in a mobile home seemed like a feasible way to live comfortably.

I have lived in my community for 16 months. Since the new owners took over three months ago, I have seen drastic changes that have affected not only my health, but the health of my neighbors.

I built out my five-year budget (which matches my life expectancy) with the thought that lot rent increases would be minimal and I would be able to cover all of my expenses. ***The owners of my community refuse to answer how much they will raise lot rent in the coming years and I'm afraid I won't be able to live my final years in peace.***

Monika Edwards:

"I've lived in Missleview mobile home park for 24 years. Since Leasco (the new owners) took over, they have been incredibly negligent with maintenance. The lack of maintenance is incredibly apparent. There are huge potholes in the road, damage in communal areas, and broken street lights, and every time I've made a complaint to management, they have told me there's no money in the budget to fix the damage. So I took it upon myself to send a letter to the regional manager and the CEO to inform them of the issues of the park that have gotten progressively worse. Since then,

management has targeted me (and others), who have stood up against them at every possible turn. I have gotten citations for not cleaning up dog poop in my yard (*I don't have a dog*), painting the curb of my home because they refuse to (*vandalism*), debris in my yard, grass not being cut and much more. Currently, they are refusing to take my rent payments, and they won't give me a reason why. I'm terrified they are trying to evict me. Management watches everything I do now, and they go behind my back, going as far as to ask neighbors about things that I do. ***People shouldn't have to live in fear, park management shouldn't be able to have this much control over residents; as long as we take care of our homes we should be left alone. Now I'm terrified I'm going to lose my home, and so are many others in my community.***

Residents will be calling up Brevard's Legislative delegation to address issues by introducing policy protections that would:

1. **Stop Rent Gouging:** In some Florida manufactured home communities, homeowners are gouged on rent and fees, while in other states and cities, limits have been put on rent increases. When rent is raised above a certain threshold, community owners should provide itemized, written documentation proving why increased costs made it necessary to raise rents that high.
2. **Create Reasonable Regulations:** New community rules must not be arbitrary, discriminatory, or demonstrably irrelevant to the goals they purport to achieve
3. **Provide for Good Cause Protections in relation to Evictions and Nonrenewals of Leases:** Manufactured homeowners should not be able to evict or refuse to renew a lease for arbitrary, retaliatory, or discriminatory reasons but only for noncompliance with the lease terms and reasons listed in the law.
4. **Require the Development of Community Improvement Plans:** To keep community owners accountable, not only should they be responsible for the maintenance of land they own, including tree trimming, sewage, and lawn mowing, but they must also present residents with a yearly community improvement plan itemizing what they will fix and improve in the upcoming year, as well as the anticipated cost and timeline."

Residents have been organizing as community leaders with MHAction. MHAction's mission is to engage and empower residents of manufactured home communities (mobile home parks) to build local, state, and national campaigns that protect and strengthen the viability and affordability of their communities; build multi-racial, intergenerational coalitions; and strengthen progressive community power in their regions. Core to MHAction's work is uniting and organizing people across class, race, religion, age, citizenship status, sexual orientation, and gender to fight back and prioritize the needs of communities that have been historically marginalized.

MHAction's work began as a special project under the Center for Community Change in 2012. On May 1, 2016, MHAction launched as an independent 501(c)(3) fiscally-sponsored project and is today sponsored at Tides Center, with its sister (c)(4) project, MHActionVotes!, fiscally-sponsored at Tides Advocacy.

Additional information on MHAction can be found at <https://www.mhaction.org/>