



**PUBLIC LAW CENTER**  
PROVIDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE  
FOR ORANGE COUNTY'S LOW INCOME RESIDENTS

July 15, 2014

Mayor Jim Righeimer  
Costa Mesa City Council  
City of Costa Mesa  
77 Fair Drive  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Re: Objection to Proposed Ordinance-Code Amendment CO-13-03 to Title 13, Chapter IX, Article 8 Governing Motels

Dear Mayor Righeimer and Councilmembers:

Public Law Center strongly objects to the proposed ordinance that will eliminate long term occupancy from motels in the City of Costa Mesa. Public Law Center is a pro bono law firm that represents the interest of low-income residents in Orange County, including Costa Mesa. Public Law Center believes in the availability of affordable housing in all communities and the preservation of low-income housing if affordable housing is not adequately available.

The City of Costa Mesa does not have adequate affordable housing for its residents. Today, many low-income residents, families and working individuals reside as long term occupants in the motels of Costa Mesa. Spanning a wide range of reasons, the long term occupants in the motels live there because there are no other affordable alternatives for them in Costa Mesa.

The long term occupants in the motels stay as tenants for many reasons, including job loss, catastrophic medical expenditures, a reduction in income, or simply because they do not earn enough income for more traditional forms of housing. These residents include families with young children. The motels afford temporary housing while these residents and families work on obtaining more permanent living arrangements. Due to the varied economic status of the residents, some stay as long term occupants for a month, while other residents stay for years. The majority of long term residents stay for many months so they can save up money for a security deposit on a rental property, look for employment, or take care of medical or legal issues that arise. Long term occupancy in motels provides residents with a more economical alternative to traditional rental housing.

Public Law Center has vehemently objected to the City's ongoing campaign to eliminate the stock of low income housing while no other alternatives are made available for the low-income residents of Costa Mesa. The proposed ordinance's minor carve-out to grandfather in the current long term occupants does not adequately address the fact that many residents of Costa Mesa will need to use the motels as last-resort housing in the future. This community

needs the motels to serve as a housing backstop when residents of Costa Mesa fall on difficult financial times. With the current shortage of affordable housing options in Costa Mesa, there is no reason to limit last resort accommodations until the city is able to provide a meaningful and viable alternative.

It is not in the best interest of the residents of Costa Mesa to eliminate long term occupancy in a city that cannot provide affordable housing for its low income residents. We therefore urge you to vote against today's proposed ordinance.

Sincerely,

Lili Graham  
Public Law Center