

NEWS

Huntington Beach mobile home owners seek relief with state Assembly bill



Bob Harold and Suzan Neil, both wearing red shirts, attend a Huntington Beach City Council meeting last June. They are residents of the Skandia mobile home park. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)

BY MATT SZABO | STAFF WRITER

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Mobile home residents in Huntington Beach, who have been [feeling the heat for the last couple of years](#), are supporting a new bill that could ease some of their rent concerns.

[Assembly Bill 1035](#) was introduced Feb. 15 by state Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance), and is set to be reviewed by the [Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee](#) on Wednesday.

According to its text, the bill would enact the Mobile Home Affordability Act. It would prohibit the management of a mobile home park from increasing the gross rental rate for a tenancy for a space more than 3% plus the percentage change in the cost of living — or 5%, whichever is lower — over the course of any 12-month period.

AB 1035 would also prohibit management from increasing the gross rental rate for a tenancy in more than two increments over a 12-month period, after the tenant maintains the tenancy for a year.

“We’re feeling very hopeful,” said Teri Williams, chief operating officer for the Huntington Beach Mobile Home Resident Coalition.

Williams noted the bill could move quickly, passing immediately to a vote on the Assembly floor because it contains no financial elements. Her hope is that it eventually lands on the desk of Gov. Gavin Newsom, to sign into law.

Williams lives at Huntington by the Sea mobile home park and said her rent has increased by nearly \$200 per month this year, to about \$2,300 per month. She said she feels that the rent increase is unreasonable.

“Our mobile home rents are comparable to two-bedroom apartments, rent-wise, and that’s with no fridge, no stove, nobody to come fix our maintenance issues,” she said.

Mobile home owners have been seeking relief from Huntington Beach city leaders for months. Last April, the city’s [Mobile Home Advisory Board](#) voted 5-4 to send a proposed rental stabilization ordinance “carveout” of Section 803 of the city charter to the City Council for review.

Mobile home owners hoped that would eventually get an item on last November's ballot, but the council never brought a possible carveout measure to a vote. Instead, it [voted to approve a tenant-based rental assistance program](#) last September, but that would only initially assist up to 30 local mobile home residents.



Skandia mobile home residents wear solidarity red shirts, hold signs as they listen to public comments during a Huntington Beach Mobile Home Advisory Board meeting in April 2022. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)

More recently, the City Council last week on a 6-1 vote denied a request by the city's Mobile Home Advisory Board for outreach and a market research study that would cost about \$10,000.

Mayor Pro Tem Gracey Van Der Mark's motion to approve the MHAB's annual report — but not the outreach and market research study — was seconded by Councilman Pat Burns. Mayor Tony Strickland, Councilmen Casey McKeon and Dan Kalmick and Councilwoman Natalie Moser also voted against the study.

Councilwoman Rhonda Bolton was the lone dissenting vote.

The last market research study was completed in 2002, when the city was mulling whether a rent stabilization ordinance was needed.

“I don’t feel it’s proper to use taxpayer money on a survey to promote rent control, which is prohibited by our city charter,” McKeon said.

Kalmick voted for Van Der Mark’s motion only after his substitute motion, which would have approved the study, failed 4-3.

“I think that gathering that type of information is what government’s really good at,” Kalmick said. “I don’t believe it’s necessarily directly related to a push for rent control, since that requires a vote of 50% plus one of the people. I think folks that are moving into mobile home parks want to have an understanding of what rent is around the city. If they are being treated unfairly, they can advocate for themselves, but I don’t think that gets us to rent control.”

Several mobile home residents spoke during public comments in favor of the market study.

“This analysis is long overdue,” said Jeanne Farrens, a retired teacher and resident of Skandia Mobile Home Parks. “The Huntington Beach mobile home community, of which I am a part, represents a sizable portion of the electorate. This study is necessary to provide council leaders and city staff with up-to-date statistics regarding important demographics and an unbiased rent comparison.”

Williams said in a phone interview Wednesday that the lack of city action has been frustrating. Another option is seeking enough signatures to possibly get a mobile home carveout on the ballot in 2024.

“I don’t want to say that we’ve given up on Huntington Beach, but they just weren’t helpful in any way,” she said. “We’re so excited that it’s at the state level now ... [but] if this bill does not pass, we will have to go back to the city and start that fight again.

“If the state could do this for us, it would save our lives. And that’s literally. It would save people’s lives.”

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