

2013 00324

City of Cincinnati Council
Cincinnati, Ohio
February 9, 2013

To the Council,

We the parents of Ellen Garner, one of the UC students who died as a result of the University Heights house fire on January 1, 2013. As we write, we have already suffered the most tragic loss that any parent can experience. Ellen was a treasure to us that cannot be replaced.

We find it unfortunate that we have been drawn into speaking about the issue of fire safety around college campuses. That being said, we would like to express some of our concerns over this issue.

Fire safety around university campuses is a common concern around the country and no less of a concern around the University of Cincinnati. Old residential homes are often converted in to commercial housing where the number of people living in the units exceeds the original design requirements. Such housing is often cold and drafty in the winter and the use of space heaters is common. This situation leads to numerous fire safety concerns that need to be addressed by local fire code.

As parents, we are concerned about several aspects surrounding this issue. They include:

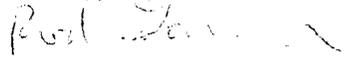
1. adequacy and appropriateness of local fire code (this includes adequate emergency egress capability in buildings);
2. awareness of responsibilities on the part of landlords;
3. enforcement of local fire codes; and
4. Fire safety awareness on the part of university leaders, parents, and students.

We are asking that the City of Cincinnati council work with local fire safety professionals to review the items listed above and determine where improvements may be made.

In addition, we are aware that there has been a proposal to rename the current ordinance after Ellen and Chad. We support this endeavor believing that it would be an honor to their names and that it would help to bring about more awareness of fire safety issues around the campus area.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Rod and Ann Garner

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing you to share our recent story of our son Chad and his friend Ellen. He was recently a victim of a house fire on Digby Ave. He was about to start his senior year at the University of Cincinnati in the area of Marketing. He was an outstanding young man who knew the value of work and cared for all those around him. He passed away on January 7, 2013.

We want to make sure that the housing for students become stricter and are taken much more seriously. We want the ordinance to be put in place and enforced that every owner/ landlord knows their renters first hand and knows the problems in the house first hand. That they have emergency exits on every floor and in some cases two exits for the third floor apts. They should have maps for these exits through out the house. They themselves should be checking the fire alarms on a regular basis and have fire drills at the beginning of each new semester. All rooms should be properly heated and insulated so the need for extra heaters is not needed.

We would also like to propose that during the fire drills that the owner/landlords remind them of what happened to Chad and Ellen and that they tell them the importance of not opening any doors due to the risk of toxic smoke that could be fatal if inhaled. We have always learned that you are to check the door handle and if it is hot don't open it but no one ever says beware of opening the door in case of cyanide poisoning.

The morning of the fire when the alarms went off, I imagine Chad and Ellen checked the door to see if it was hot and when it wasn't, they opened the door to see if they could get down the stairs. The firemen said the smoke was so toxic that they were out cold the instant the door was opened and then went into cardiac arrest. The lack of oxygen to the brain caused severe swelling to the brain of which they could not over come. In Chad's case though, the trach. operation failed and he died as a result. We are unsure though if he would have ever come out of the semi coma state he was in. It was still too early to tell. Ellen on the other hand, could never over come seizures which eventually took her life.

There are a lot of issues here... the owner was negligent in knowing his renters first hand and did not check up whether the issues in the house were being taken care of. He did not keep his landlord accountable. The heat in the house did not work very well, kitchen sink was not always working, one bathroom did not work well, if at all. The boys in the house were messy but responsible, good kids.

The heater that caused the fire was in a room with very little heat and it gave a false sense of security. It had a faulty safety feature that gave a false sense of security. It was advertized that it would turn off if anything fell on it, which was not the case. This is another factor that needs to be addressed with all renters. Do not trust the advertizing companies for their elaborate promises that tend to fall short.

We would appreciate you taking this very seriously to save others lives. We are grief stricken in the loss of our son, Chad and his friend, Ellen. We are also very concerned for Matt who was a victim as well, by trusting this heating company's claims and by not having a good heating system in his room to start with. We urge you to take this seriously and make some changes.

Thank you,
Greg and Anne Kohls

February 8, 2013

Dear Honorable Members of the Cincinnati City Council

It was early morning January 1, 2013, when I received a text message from my daughter informing me that Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls were in a fire. That day has changed my life forever. Ellen Garner was a beautiful young lady who loved life. She had a smile that would light up the room and lived each day with passion. She was going to make a difference in this world. Chad Kohls was a bright, caring young man. He was scheduled to graduate from the Carl H. Lindner College of Business on April 27, 2013, but unfortunately, he will not.

The tragedy that took place at 2824 Digby Avenue, Cincinnati, could have been prevented had the CMC Sec 1117-11-Exits been enforced. As a parent of four, two who are currently University of Cincinnati students, I am respectfully asking that the Cincinnati City Council revise Sec 1117-11 to enforce fire safety to include fire escapes and photoelectric smoke detectors. My vision is for Cincinnati City Council, working in conjunction with landlords, fire officials, the University, and housing inspectors to enforce a stricter Sec 1117-11 Exit ordinance.

Currently, I am paying rent for off campus housing at UC. Last year, my daughter experienced several times without heat, red tagged stove, and the ceiling falling down in the bathroom. The landlord was unresponsive. We personally had to solve the issues. There is a serious problem with rental property around the UC Campus. I am not alone in my "rental experiences." Addressing the issue of fire safety is the first step.

I am requesting Cincinnati City Council to examine Sec 1117-11 and to make the penalties strict for those who do not comply with the ordinance. I also ask the Council to never let Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls be forgotten. Please do not let their deaths be in vain. Also, I ask for your positive action on the behalf of all the current and future students at the University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, Cincinnati State, Cincinnati Christian University, and Hebrew Union. Finally, I am asking for your support to rename Sec 1117-11 Exit ordinance to be known as the Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls ordinance. Let their names be synonymous with fire safety and enforcement.

Thank you for consideration-



Dr. Karen M. Lankisch
Professor/Parent
University of Cincinnati

To Whom It May Concern,

This correspondence is in support of the effort to name the ordinance CMC Sec. 1117-11-Exits in memory of Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls.

Ellen and Chad lost their lives as the result of a house fire, on Digby Avenue in Clifton Heights, on January 1, 2013. This tragic loss is unimaginable, as the parent of two college aged adults. In retrospect, my son lived in a house last year, that by no means met the requirements of this ordinance. My awareness has been painfully altered by this event, as Ellen was a close friend of my son's. I feel that the ordinance should be reviewed regarding the exemptions for residences of a certain age, if they are to be inhabited by non related parties.

I believe that the naming of the ordinance, in their memory, would bring attention to it's requirements as well as increase the awareness of students and their parents. Please consider this opportunity to bring something positive from this heartbreaking tragedy.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,

Gayle B. Bradford
3553 Raymar Blvd.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45208

Dear City Council Members,

I am composing this letter in apprehension of a current city ordinance, (specifically Sec. 1117-11 – Exits.) My best friend, Ellen Garner and her boyfriend Chad Kohls lost their lives in a preventable house fire on Digby Avenue, caused by a space heater on New Year's Day. According to the ordinance I listed above, the house that Chad and Ellen were staying was nowhere close to being up to code as a second exit route was not supplied and the HVAC system was extremely poor.

Had a fire escape been put in place, or even a simple rope ladder provided, Ellen and Chad would not have had to make the decision whether to battle the thick black smoke, or presumably fall three stories to certain death or life debilitating injury on the concrete below. I urge you to make fire safety enforcement a priority and a requirement for all landlords. I also believe that it should be the responsibility of the city to make sure every house is up to code. I know of many classmates who live in similar situations as Chad and Ellen. I believe that if the city is to write such a law, then the least they could do is enforce it; otherwise the ordinance is simply just words.

I also believe that if the house on Digby had an updated heating system, then the use of space heaters could be avoided. As a current resident in Clifton, I too use a space heater, and now fear the dangers of them. I believe that many Clifton residences should be promptly updated.

Finally, I urge you to honor my fallen friends in the renaming of Sec. 1117-11 – Exits, after them. I would like to think of Chad and Ellen as heroes so that no other parents will have to receive that dreadful phone call.

This year, the University of Cincinnati has dealt with terrible tragedies and I would like to see that the preventable ones never happen again. I have witnessed first hand the poor quality of many Clifton residences and found many not up to code. I urge you to consider updating this ordinance, and specifically enforcing it so that I, and fellow students and families, do not have to attend another funeral.

Thank you for your consideration,

Regards,



Rebecca Kuennemeier

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to address the standing
of the current entrance and some safety exits and
the lack of a general building

Ellen Greiner was a good friend I know. There are
no more words to describe her character, intelligent, and
kind. She was a great person and a great
friend. She was here for me every day that's gone
and she's gone. I'm going to miss her.

I am currently in the process of an apartment building myself
and I'm not making it more planned. I'm not sure with
my own hands. I'm not sure if I can do it, in the event of
an emergency. You must think things such as this would
happen to you or your loved ones.

I know during that horrible New Year's morning fire and
the 11/9/01 attack. I'm not sure. In the words of the
Council and Commission they made it to the Stairwell.
I'm not sure how many people had the tragic event
I'm not sure. I'm not sure. There are improvements that could
be made to the entrance to keep events like this from
happening in the future.

I will really miss her and ask you to change the
name of the entrance in memory of those lost in
memory of Chad and Ellen.

Thank you for your time,

John Kerner

February 4, 2013

Cincinnati City Council
801 Plum St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202-1979

Dear Council Members,

On the first day of 2013, thousands of hearts were filled with heartbreak after the devastating fire that eventually claimed the lives of two amazing young lives. Ellen Garner was a bright, talented, cheerful, sweet, and beautiful young lady from our Tipp City United Methodist Church Youth Group. She had so much to offer this world. Although I did not personally know Chad Kohls, he was an equally loved young man who was robbed of the chance to live out his life.

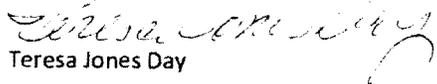
Against the odds, thousands of people joined together to pray for a miracle as Ellen and Chad fought for their lives. Many of those people are still in a state of shock, trying to understand how this could have happened to these wonderful University of Cincinnati students. We realize that horrible accidents occur every day. However, it is the neglect in the understanding of a city ordinance, which could have prevented this tragedy that hurts so very much.

I wanted to believe that Ellen and Chad passed peacefully in their sleep. Somehow, this would have made it easier to accept. But, knowing that they were looking for an escape route, one that should have been there, but wasn't, makes me want to do all I can to prevent this tragedy from happening again.

I beg you to please make whatever changes are necessary that would demand stricter enforcement of the city ordinance, which is currently in place. Please do this in honor of our beloved Ellen and Chad.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Teresa Jones Day
Jamestown, OH
teresa@adleap.com
937-477-7036

5825 Phillip Drive
Tipp City OH 45371
February 4, 2013

City of Cincinnati Council
City Hall
801 Plum Street
Cincinnati OH 45202

Dear Council Members,

I write this letter to you with a hurting heart. My dear friends are mourning the loss of their daughter Ellen Garner. Could Ellen's death have been prevented by enforcement of the State and City building codes which say that when six or more non-related adults live in a house, it must have two ways out of a third floor living area? Perhaps. We will never know. We do know that the house that Ellen spent her last night in, specifically in a third floor living area of a rental house, had only one exit. Unfortunately, neither Ellen nor Chad Kohls were able to reach that one exit.

I urge the City of Cincinnati to take the steps necessary to inspect and enforce the codes that are on the books. If one life can be saved, then your efforts are worth it. In the meantime, I will cry alongside my friends, Rod and Ann Garner and hold them close as they grieve in this tragedy.

Respectfully,



Laura Baird

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to you in deep concern of a current city ordinance, (specifically Sec. 1117-11 - Exits) as I have lost two dear friends in a house fire recently, whose deaths could have been prevented, had this been amended years ago. My two friends, Chad Kohls and Ellen Garner were victims of a space heater caused house fire on Digby Avenue on New Year's Day. According to the ordinance listed above, the house they were in was not up to code. I believe that it should be the responsibility of someone other than the tenants to make sure the conditions of the living space are up to city code. The responsibility should be placed with the landlord. Perhaps mandatory checks by city officials done around move-in dates, which are typically around the beginning of August would be even more efficient.

Had a fire escape been installed, or even a simple rope ladder supplied, I strongly believe that my friends would still be with us today. Also, I urge you to push for better fire education as the curriculum currently stresses the dangers of the actual flames and not the dangers of cyanide poisoning through smoke inhalation. I am certain that Chad and Ellen checked the door for heat and when it was not hot, they had felt it was safe to open. The firemen said that the rush of the black smoke caused an almost instant cardiac arrest.

Next, I believe that had the house on Digby Ave. had an adequate HVAC system, the use of a space heater would not have been required. As a current inhabitant of the Clifton area, I too use a space heater often due to poor insulation and outdated HVAC systems. I believe many of these residences should be mandatorily updated.

Finally, I urge you to honor my fallen friends by renaming the ordinance after them. I would like to think of Chad and Ellen as heroes who will save many lives by helping people understand the danger of fires and the importance of observing proper code.

The University of Cincinnati has dealt with immense tragedy in these past months, as four students have fallen. I have witnessed first hand the poor quality of many Clifton residences and seen many that are currently not up to code. I urge you to consider mandating the enforceability of Section 1117-11 - Exits as my fellow students and I do not want to have to go to another funeral.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Bradford". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Michael Bradford

February 12, 2013

Cincinnati City Council

801 Plum St.

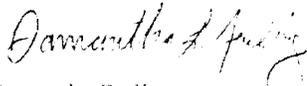
Cincinnati, OH 45202

To Whom It May Concern:

REGARDING: CMC Sec. 1117-11, Exits.

I am writing to express my hope that this ordinance will be changed in order to provide safer measures for residents of three-story houses and that the law will be strictly enforced. I would like to request that this Ordinance be renamed in honor of the late Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls. Miss Ellen Garner and I have been best friends since infancy and it is my hope and wish that no one ever has to go through this painful journey of losing a best friend and a sister through a preventable tragedy. It is clear that if this Ordinance had been strictly enforced, the outcome of this tragedy would have been much different. I deeply appreciate and thank you in advance for your consideration of this request!

Sincerely,



Samantha Farling

February 18, 2013

Cincinnati City Council
801 Plum Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is in regards to CMC Sec. 1117-11-Exits. We are requesting that this ordinance be strictly enforced and ensure that there are proper exits in each and every apartment and house in Cincinnati. We have recently been struck with grief with the horribly tragic death of Ellen Garner, a dear friend of our family, and Chad Kohls. Their precious lives were taken too soon because this ordinance was not enforced and they were unable to escape from the burning house because the proper exits were not available to them. We are requesting that this ordinance be enforced to ensure more young lives are not taken by horrific situations like this. We are also suggesting that it be revised to eliminate any confusion and guarantee that all landlords understand their responsibilities with regard to fire safety and proper exits. If this ordinance had been followed appropriately, the deaths of Ellen and Chad could have been prevented. In addition, we are requesting that the current ordinance on fire safety and proper exits be named in remembrance of Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls, to honor their amazing lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

William and Michelle Watters

5825 Phillip Drive
Tipp City OH 45371
February 4, 2013

City of Cincinnati Council
City Hall
801 Plum Street
Cincinnati OH 45202

Dear Council Members,

I write this letter to you with a hurting heart and concerns with students staying in homes. I recently went thru the most horrible experience, my friends lost their daughter. Her name was Ellen. I got to watch Ellen grow up and my kids grew up with Ellen. Could Ellen's death have been prevented by enforcement of the State and City building codes which say that when six or more non-related adults live in a house, it must have two ways out of a third floor living area?

We do know that the house that Ellen spent her last night in, specifically in a third floor living area of a rental house, had only one exit. Unfortunately, neither Ellen nor Chad Kohls were able to reach that one exit.

It worries me that this could happen again I'm asking that you PLEASE hold home owners accountable to codes that are on the books and if there not they should be fined and shut down till they do.

I urge the City of Cincinnati to take the steps necessary to inspect and enforce the codes that are on the books. If one life can be saved, then your efforts are worth it.

Respectfully,



Jeff Baird

541 W. Broadway St.
Tipp City, OH 45371
February 7, 2013

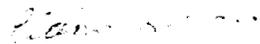
Dear City of Cincinnati Council:

Re: Sec 1117-11-Exits

Please consider re-naming this ordinance in memory of Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls. These two wonderful young people deserve to be honored and remembered. As a friend of the Garner family, I can state that Ellen was a wonderful, talented person. Her death has affected many people. Let's honor her memory as well as Chad's by strictly and more effectively enforcing this ordinance. This must not happen to someone else.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Elaine K. Hoover

February 8, 2013

Cincinnati City Council
801 Plum Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

To Whom It May Concern:

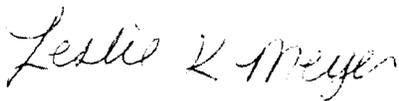
REG: CMC Section 1117-11 EXITS ORDINANCE

This letter is to express my hopes of the ordinance being changed to take safer measures to protect our college students and all residents of three story homes. I am requesting that it be named in honor of the late Ellen Marie Garner and Chad Kohls who recently lost their lives due to the lack of enforcement of this ordinance or lack of understanding to it's wording and if we could try to enforce the law better in some way to try to prevent this from happening again.

I truly believe with the proper codes in effect and the proper legislation to enforce these codes that this tragedy could have been avoided.

Thank you in advance for hearing our requests and considering these measures.

Sincerely yours,



Leslie K. Meyer

&



Joseph Albert Meyer

Leslie Meyer
2229 Salamanca St.
Navarre, FL 32566-9235

Mr. Joseph A. Meyer
2229 Salamanca St.
Navarre, FL 32566-9235

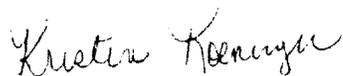
February 12, 2013

Cincinnati City Council
801 Plum Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in regards to CMC Section 117-11. This ordinance should be renamed in honor of Chad Kohls and Ellen Garner. Chad and Ellen were two amazing young people. My dear friend, Becca Kuennemeier, was extremely close to Ellen. I could not tell you how many times Becca spoke of Ellen. She had such a bright future in fashion. She could have inspired so many others. Sadly, that bright future was cut short by a lack of safety precautions. Chad and Ellen could be in midst of studying for mid terms right now. Sadly, their seats in the classes are still eerily empty. If this ordinance was enforced and taken seriously by landlords, Chad and Ellen may still be with us today. I am asking you to consider the hundreds, and possibly thousands, that have been effected by this horrific tragedy. Family, friends, teachers, classmates, co-workers, and acquaintances are also asking you to listen to our plea. This ordinance should reflect the amazing lives of Chad and Ellen that ended too quickly for all of us. Thank you for taking the time to listen to our prayers and requests.

With anticipation,



Kristen Koeninger

Ms. Laure Quinlivan
Cincinnati City Council Member

February 13, 2013

Dear Ms. Quinlivan,

Thank you so much for working with the UC students and parents that are lobbying for the enforcement of the city ordinance regarding a fire escape for houses with three or more floors. It is appalling to me that this ordinance has not been strictly enforced. Enforcement of this ordinance would have likely saved the lives of UC students Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls. My heart breaks for Ellen's and Chad's parents. As all parents know, there is absolutely nothing worse than losing a child, except perhaps when that loss could have and should have been prevented as in this case.

I am affected by this loss not just in the general sense of empathetic feelings towards parents who have experienced the ultimate loss but also as I realize that I could have easily been one of these parents as one of my children lived on the third floor of a Clifton rental when he attended UC. All of us parents that have had children living in Clifton rentals know what terrible condition these homes are in but never would I ever think that a landlord would be permitted to rent unsafe housing that is in such defiance of our city ordinances.

I have three children, two have graduated from UC and my daughter is a freshman at UC. My daughter lives in University Park Apartments this year and when she started talking about renting a Clifton house with several of her sorority friends, I put an end to that plan immediately. I will not allow her to live in any of these dilapidated houses that don't even meet minimum safety standards. I wish I had been a better informed parent when my sons lived in Clifton and I thank God every day for keeping them safe since those responsible for enforcing ordinances in Cincinnati had nothing to do with keeping them safe.

I was very happy to hear that you are the Council Member working with the UC students and parents as I already hold you in high esteem from your days of investigative reporting. I appreciated that your investigations were always about what is right and just and I am confident that you will be successful in helping to keep our children safe.

Thank you again and if there's anything I can do to help with this cause, please call on me.

Sincerely,

Darline Foltz

513-543-3107
4129 Roland Creek Dr.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45245

February 7, 2013

Cincinnati City Council
801 Plum St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Ms Quinlivan and City Council Members

I am writing this letter to express my concern regarding City of Cincinnati Building Code (Title XI of the Municipal Code), Housing Code (Chapter 1117) Sec. 1117-11 - Exits and request your action on two matters. One is to increase awareness of the ordinance by renaming the ordinance in honor of two University of Cincinnati students, Ellen Garner and Chad Kohls, who recently lost their lives in a rental house that had a single exit that was impassable due to smoke from a fire on a lower floor. If there had been another exit route, as required by the aforementioned ordinance, it is highly probable that Ellen and Chad would still be with us continuing their studies at the University and bringing joy to our lives. Unfortunately, since this ordinance is not strictly enforced, two young people lost their lives and thousands of people have been negatively impacted by this needless loss. The second action required is to increase emphasis on enforcing this ordinance so no one else has to lose their life or a loved one to such a senseless avoidable accident that can be prevented by enforcing an ordinance that is already on the books.

There are two families and two communities, as well as countless others across our nation, which are mourning this senseless loss that didn't have to happen. No one should have to receive a call like the Garner's and Kohl's received regarding the fate of their children. I request your deliberate and prompt action to remedy this problem. Renaming the ordinance to honor young the lives lost by Ellen and Chad will increase awareness and hopefully prompt current landlords that are not fulfilling the requirements to take actions to comply. For those landlords that don't comply on their own enforcement actions need to be taken. Thank you for your consideration and actions to remedy this situation.

Sincerely,



Pamela J. Sutton
5701 Troy-Frederick Rd.
Tipp City, OH 45371

February 8, 2013

Council member Laure Quinlivan, staff and City of Cincinnati council,

Regarding CMC Sec. 1117-11 – Exits from City of Cincinnati Building Code (Chapter 1117)

The beginning paragraph marked General states that every apartment and every rooming unit shall have two separate exits therefrom, or shall have access to at least two separate exits therefrom remote from each other. All exits shall be continuous and unobstructed and lead directly to a public way. The emergency escape section states only one exit is required from an apartment or from rooming unit where such apartment or rooming unit has direct access to a window meeting certain requirements regarding openable window and certain size of opening and to include somehow removable bars, grills, or screens from inside without key, tool or use of excessive force.

My name is Hayley Heck and I am familiar with the fire on UC's campus on New Year's that took the lives of two promising youth. I am requesting as a citizen of the State of Ohio and as a mother of three children this Ordinance involving Housing Code Sec 1117-11 – Exits, be named for Ellen and Chad. I want to also strongly suggest the specifics of this ordinance be strictly enforced and that it state firmly under the emergency escape section that all emergency exits be in rooms with window access to a clear escape route and that any floor above ground floor should have an escape ladder available as included in the room for rent with clear access near the window in a protective box (similar to a fire extinguisher) as to never be moved unless used in a fire emergency. I would also suggest it be checked for safety in each semester for all students safety.

On a more personal note as a mother, I have a son who has graduated college, another currently in college and a daughter that is 11. This time in a young persons life is so meaningful and such a growing period to adulthood every measure to ensure their safety needs to be taken. It is an easy inexpensive way to ensure horrible accidents like what happened to Ellen and Chad NEVER happen again. It could be an expense to the landlords or an expense included in the students deposit, either way an easy fix to an otherwise devastating circumstance. With the pressures of figuring out who you will be as an adult and what you will do with your life, the rigorous class schedules, the intense peer pressures and the additional challenges of living in this day and age; the student and the parents have enough plans, worries and obstacles. I cannot imagine there be anyone who fight against such a simple solution. What these families have to endure everyday and the pain that extends far more than any of us can fathom; I hope the city approves the changes to this ordinance and looks at it as saving future lives full of hope and promise.

Sincerely,


Hayley D Heck

Cincinnati City Council
Attn: Councilwoman Quinlivan
801 Plum St.
Cincinnati, OH 45220

Re: CMC Section 1117-11 Exits Ordinance

Dear Ms. Quinlivan:

We would like to express our support for the effort to rename and strengthen the city ordinance regarding fire safety requirements for rental properties. This ordinance is not well understood by renters, or by those ultimately responsible, the property owners. When violations occur, they are apparently not strictly enforced.

Our son was a resident of the Digby Avenue house which burned on New Year's Day. We know, firsthand, that seven people were resident in that house – only due to the lack of action from the landlord was the lease not updated to show seven. I am sure that cancelled checks can be produced to clearly show this, as well as the leases from the past two years with the seven residents' signatures. Checks were sent directly to Mr. Cleary's address in Mason by the tenants, so he should certainly know how many tenants were in his rental property.

To our knowledge, no effort was made by the landlord to verify compliance with city ordinances.

It would be extremely helpful for a renter's information package to be made available, so that renters can help monitor compliance. Mandatory inspections by city personnel would also serve to improve compliance rates. Requirements for smoke detectors, linked together and AC powered, would also help to save lives by providing a few more critical seconds for escape.

Finally, some accountability is required of the property owner when found to be out of compliance, even more so when a tragic outcome occurs. There must be some consequence for the irresponsible actions of the owner of the house on Digby, Tom Cleary.

Sincerely,


Jeff and Andrea Heinrichs

5725 Brampton Rd.
Centerville, OH 45429