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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cook County Board unanimously passes historic Residential Tenant Landlord Ordinance, extending renter protections to 245,000 suburban households

SCHAUMBURG, IL – Jan. 28, 2021 – Today, the Cook County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed the Residential Tenant Landlord Ordinance (RTLO), officially extending basic, fair, and long-overdue protections to renters and landlords in more than 245,000 suburban households. Cook County Commissioners Scott Britton (14th District) and Kevin Morrison (15th District) were chief sponsors of the ordinance, which creates consistent Countywide rules with common sense lease termination notices, basic habitability guidelines, and safeguards for tenants and landlords.

"I am proud to stand with Commissioners Scott Britton and Kevin Morrison, as well as every Cook County Commissioner who sponsored or supported the Residential Tenant Landlord Ordinance," **said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.** "Today, we affirmed the rights of renters in suburban Cook County who lacked critical protections against lockouts, excessive move-in and late fees, and exorbitant interest rates on rental arrears. For the hundreds of thousands of renters across Cook County, this will mean that more people will be able to stay in their homes at the time they need support the most."

“Today, we provided greater equity to suburban Cook County residents,” **said Cook County Commissioner Kevin Morrison.** “This ordinance is long overdue. For decades, suburban renters have lived without the same basic protections guaranteed to Chicago, Evanston, and Mount Prospect tenants. That is why I spent months fighting for and writing this ordinance. Renters’ rights are a matter of fairness and equality, and despite heavy opposition, I’m proud my colleagues today stood up for vulnerable and low-income renters during this moment of crisis.”

"Public service at its best helps those who are otherwise unable to access justice and equity - those without lawyers and lobbyists, and those who need help just to make ends meet," **said Cook County Commissioner Scott Britton.** "When Mayor Harold Washington ushered the Chicago tenants' rights ordinance in 1986, he said the legislation was 'aimed at bringing fairness to this city.' Then, community organizing was central to their effort. That is as true now as it was then. Suburban Cook County renters have waited 35 years for fairness. I am grateful to our vast coalition of community organizations for their unwavering partnership, including some of those that worked to pass the Chicago ordinance. I also thank my fellow Commissioners and President Preckwinkle for their support and solidarity with those who need us most."

The Board of Commissioners passed the RTLO 16 to 0. On Tuesday, the Zoning and Building Committee unanimously advanced the ordinance to the full county board, where Commissioners Brandon Johnson, Larry Suffredin, Bill Lowry, Alma Anaya, Dennis Deer and Deborah Sims also signed on as co-sponsors.

Commissioners Britton and Morrison first introduced the RTLO in July 2020. Since then, the Commissioners have worked with housing advocates, tenants’ rights and legal aid groups, as well as landlord, realtor and property owners’ groups, and Cook County Commissioner Peter Silvestri, chairman of the Zoning and Building Committee, to ensure the RTLO protects both tenants and landlords and establishes equitable and uniform rights and responsibilities.

"Housing is a human right. Among other benefits, the RTLO will finally prevent suburban housing providers from charging unjustifiably high security deposits and move in fees that lock countless families out of healthy and safe housing options," **said Michael Chavarria, Community Engagement Manager at Housing Choice Partners.**

"Across Suburban Cook County, people with disabilities often have to search for months, if not years, to find a housing unit that meets their needs, is accessible and is affordable," **said Larry Biondi, Manager of Advocacy at Progress Center for Independent Living.** "Because housing is such a precious commodity, it is important that we have regulations such as the Residential Tenant Landlord Ordinance, which helps ensure that people with disabilities have the protections to maintain their housing."

The RTLO goes into effect June 1; however, the anti-lockout provision takes effect immediately. The RTLO:

- Restricts retaliatory conduct and undisclosed landlord entry
- Protects owners against property destruction and abandonment
- Bans unlawful lockouts
- Provides consistency on how and when landlords can safely evict renters
- Prohibits lease terms that waive written notices, rights to a trial, and disclosures
- Blocks landlords from charging exorbitant late rent fees
- Improves procedures for completing minor repairs in a timely manner
- Guarantees fair security deposit returns

- Prevents nontransparent move-in charges
- Defends tenants from landlord retaliation
- Allows landlords a two-business day right to cure noncompliance with leases

To view the RTLO, visit: <https://bit.ly/3iT0VQQ>

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