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**REMARKS BY AMY NELSON OF THE FAIR HOUSING CENTER OF CENTRAL INDIANA
AT THE HOOSIER HOUSING NEEDS COALITION PRESS CONFERENCE
ON THE INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY’S RECENT ACTIONS**

INDIANAPOLIS, IN – I’m Amy Nelson, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana. Every week, we receive calls from Hoosiers living in sometimes deplorable housing conditions. Most of the calls we receive are Central Indiana-based and they are at devastating numbers. In just the past two years, the Center has received over 300 calls about substandard housing conditions. *300 calls!* And those are just the ones who find us. This is a statewide problem! And as we documented in a [recent report](#) – this is at the same time that Indiana landlords are seeing record profits.

Statewide, our Hoosier renters have leases in place which requires they have a habitable space. They pay their rent. But their landlord won’t make needed repairs despite being asked over and over and over again. *What are people to do?* And for an increasing number, they can’t even find their landlord. It’s some out of state company where it is hard to determine who to contact or it’s an answering service where they leave voicemail after voicemail after voicemail. *What are our renters to do?* Take the landlord to court? Take time off from work? Try to find an attorney to help? It’s an overwhelming burden upon our renters to get a landlord to simply do what they are required to do. The General Assembly needs to help *NOW*.

If a renter doesn’t pay rent to try to spur their landlord to make the needed repair, they are evicted. An eviction that follows them for the next 7 years as they try to find new housing. If they can get a response from their local health department, they are looking at least a several week process before a landlord complies – sometimes months or even years! And that is assuming the landlord doesn’t evict them in retaliation – which the burden will be on THEM, the renter, to prove. They have a lease. They are paying their rent. Why is it so hard for them, as tenants, to have a habitable, safe home?

And don’t tell me they should just move elsewhere. Don’t tell me they shouldn’t complain. They have a lease – the landlord is required to provide habitable housing. Plus, having to locate funds for application and background checks, for a new security deposit, hook up of electricity, internet, and then any moving costs. It’s incredibly expensive. And that is assuming you can even find somewhere to go with record low 6% vacancy rates, and a unit that is affordable. Even if you can afford to move, it means a likely disruption to your children in their schools, daycare, or to a network that may have been built around their home. Time off from work as well to move.

And it is not just apartment buildings. We are seeing out-of-state landlords flocking to Indiana in droves because of its landlord-friendly laws that makes it easy for them to do little for their tenants while all-the-while collecting their rent. These companies are [buying up our single-family homes](#) from hard working families who want to become homeowners, changing them to rentals, increasing the rent, and not keeping up with needed repairs.

The Center has been active in this Statehouse for several years trying to get better housing laws in place for consumers. Each year, the first question that gets asked is, do the housing industry groups agree to this? The question *not* asked is, how do we fix this? The question that is *not* asked is, how do we stop these slumlords from taking money and not keeping their properties safe? The question that is *not* asked, what can this General Assembly do to protect our Hoosier families in their housing, housing so critical to each of our daily living. The question is *not* asked, how do we stop this suffering of people living in harmful conditions?

What will it take? When will our General Assembly stand up for our Hoosier renters? Nearly half of our state are renters. The General Assembly can still act. We have

seen them act quickly when the housing industry groups feel threatened. SEA 148 a few years ago happened at the end of the session through conference committees outside of a committee process. *We demand the same urgency.* The time is NOW. We will hold our legislature accountable. Step up and do your job in representing all your constituents. Pass tenant protections NOW.

How to help:

- Find out who [your state senator and representative is](#) and demand they support legislation to assist housing consumers.
- Stay up-to-date on emerging issues by following the FHCCI on [facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and/or [YouTube](#).
- Visit the [FHCCI's Public Policy page](#) for legislative updates.
- Sign up for [Hoosier Housing Needs Coalition updates!](#) The FHCCI is on the steering committee of this statewide coalition working to address housing barriers.



The Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana (FHCCI) is a private, nonprofit fair housing organization founded in 2011 and based in Indianapolis, Indiana. Its mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities by eliminating housing discrimination through advocacy, enforcement, education, and outreach. For more information, visit: www.fhcci.org