



Sowers of Justice
Catholic Legislative Network

**Action
Alert**

Support an Ordinance to Restrict Rental Application Fees in Minneapolis

8 October 2004

Background:

Over the past several years, many landlords in Minneapolis have imposed large application fees on families looking for a safe, decent, affordable place to live. Ostensibly, these fees are supposed to cover the cost of checking a potential tenant's background.

The reality is that many landlords often charge applicants far more than the cost of conducting background searches. Many also frequently collect the fee from multiple applicants, knowing that only one applicant will be selected for the unit available. Moreover, landlords can reject an application and keep the application fee without having to explain why they denied the application in the first place. Tenants often have to pay fees to multiple landlords, and the costs become significant quickly.

Excessive rental application fees constitute a significant barrier to those searching for affordable housing. And the lack of clear criteria for accepting and rejecting applications puts fair access to housing in significant jeopardy. Over the past few years, affordable housing advocates have tried to convince the state legislature to do something to address this problem, but the legislature lacks the political will. Now, advocates are taking their fight to the local level.

Beginning this Wednesday, October 13, the Minneapolis City Council will consider an ordinance that would limit the fee a landlord can charge an applicant, require landlords to charge fees to only one applicant at a time, and require landlords to establish criteria for accepting and rejecting applications.

The ordinance would:

- Limit application fees to \$25
- Limit the number of application fees a landlord could take at one time
- Require landlords that charge a fee to establish screening criteria and share that criteria with applicants in writing before charging their fee.

The ordinance faces a key hearing on Wednesday, October 13 in front of the Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee. The full City Council will likely take up the ordinance near the end of the month.

Recommended Action:

- **Call your City Council member at 612-673-2200. Tell them you support the rental application fee ordinance sponsored by council member Schiff.**
- **Attend a rally and public hearing on the ordinance on Wednesday, October 13, beginning at 1 p.m. Both the rally and the hearing will take place at City Hall, 350 South 5th Street, downtown Minneapolis**

FFI: Call Matt Gladue at 651-291-4484