

Accountability Can't Wait

Good morning, Councilmembers.

My name is Ronesh Parker, and I am a tenant of ARHA. Over the past year, ARHA tenants have consistently raised concerns about the challenges we face, including rent miscalculations, unsafe living conditions, and unresponsive staff. These issues are not isolated; they all stem from a single underlying problem: **ARHA operates without transparency or accountability.** For too long, the City Council has failed to implement necessary changes.

We know your direct power over ARHA is limited. But let's be clear: City Council is not powerless. It is your responsibility to use the power you *do* have — to ask the hard questions, to demand answers, and to hold ARHA accountable to the people it was created to serve.

Take one recent example. On August 20th, a local news report paraphrased ARHA's own CEO admitting that tenants have been evicted because of ARHA's disorganization. Let that sink in. Families lost their homes because of the agency's mistakes. For nearly two weeks, tenants begged for clarification, and yet not one public official acknowledged it until September 3rd — and even then, it was buried in a workgroup meeting that hardly anyone in the public watches.

Now, imagine for a moment that the news had reported ARHA's mistakes had caused immigrant families to be wrongly detained by ICE. Politicians across this city would have rushed to microphones, outraged, demanding answers. And they would have been right to do so. But when the harm falls on poor families, when the mistake is wrongful evictions, we hear silence. And that silence is unacceptable.

City Council is our elected government. We expect you to protect your lowest-income constituents, not pass responsibility to appointed boards who fail to do their jobs. That might mean reorganizing ARHA. It might mean absorbing its functions into city government, as Fairfax has done. It might mean relieving commissioners of their duties for inefficiency, as Portsmouth has done.

But it must start here, with you. By showing real concern. By asking the hard questions. Make it clear that no family should lose their home because of ARHA's negligence.

Tenants are demanding accountability. Today, we ask: Will the City Council stand with us? If ARHA's disorganization can evict families, then Council's inaction makes you complicit, so how much longer will you let this go on?