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Diane Estep

Good evening. I am Diane Estep and I live and go to church in Councilman Hilbert's district. In our district, the eviction rate is 16.6% compared to the national average of 2.3%.

I am here with the RISC Organization to ask for your leadership in solving our city's eviction crisis, because eviction has a serious impact on our schools.

I am the guardian for my twin grand-niece and nephew, who are in 7th grade in Richmond Public Schools. They attended an elementary school in a neighborhood where the eviction rate was above the city's average, which we have to remember is about 6 times the national average. Our children and their education are suffering because we are not doing enough to address the problem of evictions.

18 elementary schools in Richmond are located in neighborhoods with eviction rates above our city's average of 11.4%. 10 of those schools are unaccredited.

In the 10 unaccredited schools in neighborhoods with high eviction rates, on average 83% of the kids in those schools are African-American.

When kids and their families are displaced from their homes, they are absent from school. They are not coming to school ready to learn. There is an undeniable link between our city's eviction crisis and the challenge our schools are facing in getting to full accreditation.

We are invested in supporting our schools. We know our teachers and principals are doing all they can every single day to ensure kids feel safe and supported, so that they can learn. But if we do not address the root problem of evictions and the turmoil this creates for children in Richmond, our schools and our children will continue to suffer. There are two straightforward solutions that you have the power to implement this year. We can make a significant impact on our city's eviction rate and our education system.

I am asking that you would make sure that the Affordable Housing Trust Fund remains in the budget at \$2.9 million and the Eviction Diversion Program at \$485,000.

I hope you will attend RISC's Nehemiah Action Assembly on May 2nd to directly address these issues with 1,200 of your constituents.