



**AUSTIN STREET
CENTER**

Advocating for Fair Housing: Tackling Landlord Exploitation and Navigating a Hostile Market

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Introduction



To provide an overview of challenges tenants face in a hostile housing market.



To discuss strategies for combatting landlord exploitation while acknowledging the landlord experience



To explore potential policy solutions and advocacy approaches for making sure clients are safeguarded against excessive junk fees

Obstacles Tenants Face in an Aggressive Housing Market



- Rising Rent Price
- Limited Affordable Housing Options
- Slow Construction for Affordable Housing
- Gentrification
- Reduction in Government Funding
- Discrimination

Obstacles Tenants Face in an Aggressive Housing Market (continued)

- Rent Gouging
- Health and Safety Concerns
- Limited Tenant Protections
- Credit and Background Checks
- Long Wait Times for Subsidized Housing



Why Support is Crucial for Clients

- First, we must understand what a client's needs are. Everyone's situation is unique, and support services offer personalized assistance based on their specific needs whether that's financial, emotional, or logistical.

Supporting clients help to reduce stress and anxiety.



Why Support is Crucial for Clients

- Homelessness
- Digital Literacy
- Reading Levels
- Advocating



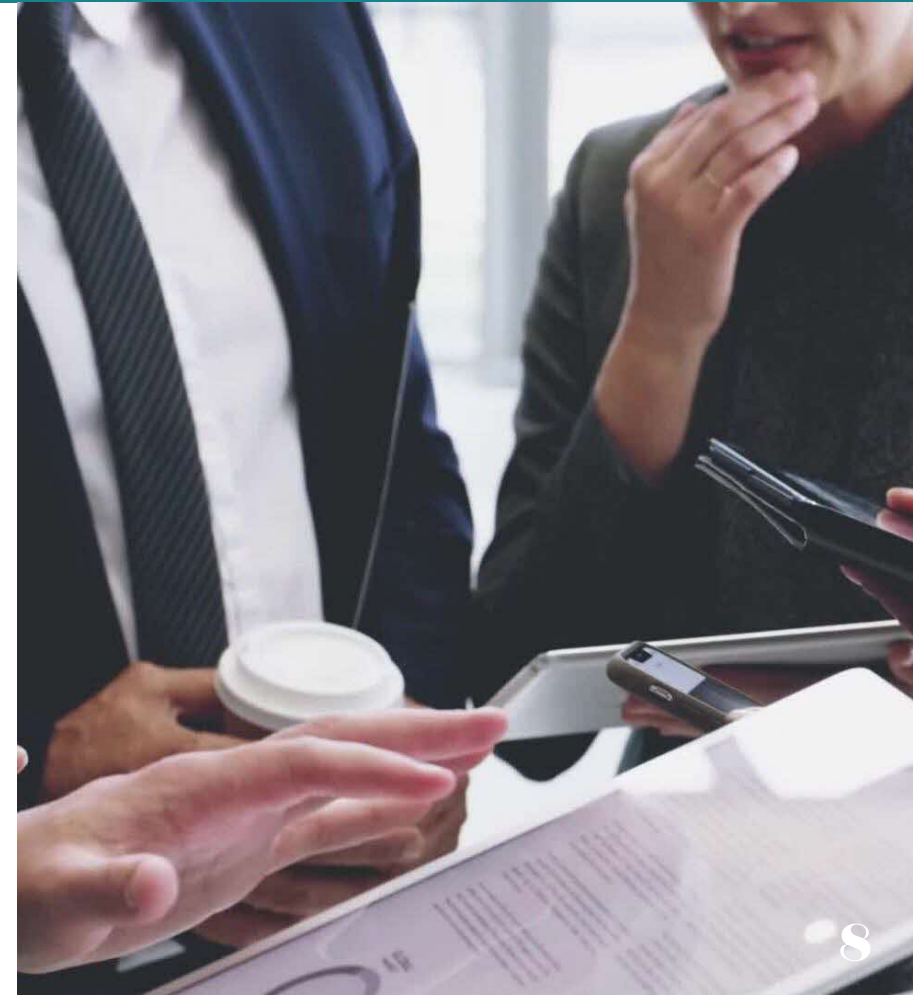
Landlord Exploitation

- Landlord exploitation refers to practices by landlords that take unfair advantage of tenants. This can include a range of unethical or illegal behaviors that negatively impact tenants' rights and well-being, such as charging unjustified junk fees.



Junk Fees – What are they?

- Charges for mandatory services that tenants cannot opt out of.
- Tacked on to their rent without advertisement
- Deceptive, excessive, or unnecessary charges that can seriously disrupt tenant's financial stability and well-being
- Tenants face eviction for not paying these fees



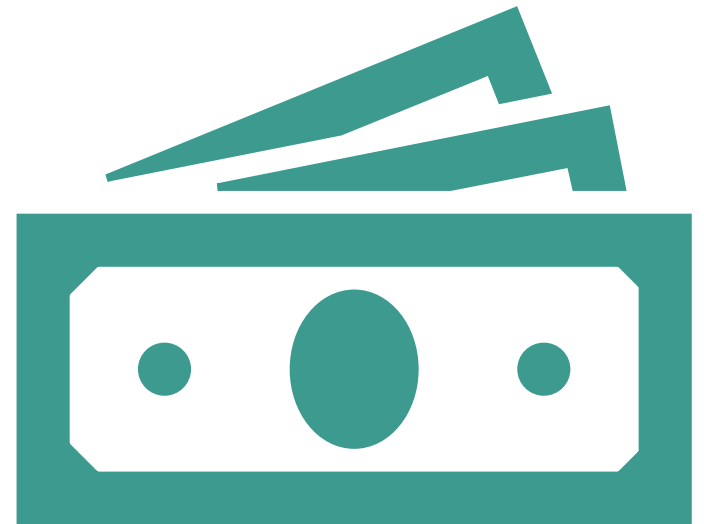
Examples of Junk Fees



- Application Fee
- Admin Fee
- Risk Fee
- Nonrefundable deposit
- Online service fees
- Amenity Fees
- Maintenance
- Building insurance
- Utility admin fees
- Mandatory Pest Control
- Community Fee
- Mandatory Valet Trash (plus allocation!)
- Storm Damage
- Repair Charges
- Boiler Fee
- Payment Processing Fee
- Wellness Check Fee
- Notice Fee

How Junk Fees Affect Renters

- Increased Overall Cost
- These fees can significantly raise the total cost of renting.
- Lack of Transparency
- Often not disclosed upfront, leading to unexpected expenses.
- Impact on Budgeting
- Harder for renter to accurately budget their living expenses.



How to Combat Potential Exploitation



READ THE LEASE
CAREFULLY



ALWAYS REVIEW
ALL TERMS AND
CONDITIONS.



ASK QUESTIONS



INQUIRE ABOUT
ANY UNCLEAR
FEES BEFORE
SIGNING.



NEGOTIATE FEES
INTO RENT PRICE



CHECK LEDGERS



CONSULT WITH
CLIENTS

The Landlord Experience

- Rise in cost of labor, materials, property taxes
- Occupancy rates
- Market-Based Economy: Things are worth what people are willing to pay
- Traditional vs. Tax-Credit



The Landlord Experience

Frustrations with tenants

Mitigate risks

- Property damage
- Crime and Safety (real and perceived)
- Repair Costs
- Insurance
- Turnover
- Eviction Costs



Legal and Ethical Considerations

- ❖ Are junk fees legal?
- ❖ How can landlords cover their businesses in an ethical manner?
- ❖ How can policy help prevent potential exploitation?
- ❖ Can we impact the market as housing programs?

Resources

KERA, "Report: 'Junk Fees' add a hidden burden to Texas tenants already struggling with high rents." Christopher Connelly. April 15, 2024

[Whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)

Thank You for Attending

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