**[Empty Home Penalty or Vacancy Tax Form Letter]
*This is a template that may be used to write a letter to any elected officials or editors of local papers regarding an EMPTY HOME PENALTY or VACANCY TAX. We encourage you to revise the letter in your own words.***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Name and/or Title
Company
Address
City, State Zip Code*

Re: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Agenda Item \_\_\_\_\_\_)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:
**(*Insert “Editor” or “Hon. Mayor ‘Last Name’ and Members of the ‘Name of City’ City Council” or other name*)**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I am a responsible housing provider in the City of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am writing this letter to express my strong opposition to the City Council’s consideration of imposing **[‘empty home penalties’ or ‘vacancy tax’]**. Imposing any form of **[‘empty home penalties’ or ‘vacancy tax’]** will cause more property owners like me to exit the rental housing business and further lead to housing shortages in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. **[I have lived in the City of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, and I wish to continue providing housing for individuals and families in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ community.]**

 **[Explain how long you have owned rental property and/or became a rental property owner, and how you have been a responsible housing provider.]**

I have been a rental property owner for \_\_\_\_\_ years. I have [had] worked 9:00 to 5:00 jobs my entire life, and after much sacrifice, I [we] finally saved up enough money to buy a \_\_\_\_\_\_ unit apartment building in the City of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I have not raised my rent for \_\_\_\_\_ years, and I am one of the many that provide housing under market value in the area. I am [we are] not in the eviction business, and my [our] desire is to never evict renters but rather to provide housing for those who need it in our community.

However, imposing **[‘empty home penalties’ or ‘vacancy tax’]** will clearly hinder the abilities of small, “mom and pop” housing providers to remain in the rental housing industry. I [we] have an overwhelming number of incentives to rent our units, and do not need a new tax or fee to penalize me **[us]** when I **[we]** do have a vacant unit from time to time. These incentives include but are not limited to mortgages, property taxes, insurance, and any additional monthly expenses incurred by the owner to properly maintain one’s property. However, there are instances where the unit must be vacant. For example, major renovations may be planned for the unit, or the new buyer of the property has requested that the units remain vacant. There are expected and unanticipated circumstances that require the units to be vacant at times, and rental housing providers should not be unfairly punished for these circumstances.

Currently, the vacancy rate in the City of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is only around \_\_\_\_\_% to \_\_\_%, which is significantly lower than other larger urban areas in the nation. So, what is the need to adopt a measure that penalizes those who provide affordable housing in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ community? If imposing the **[‘empty home penalties’ or ‘vacancy tax’]** is the Council’s solution to mitigate the problem of homelessness, the Council should note that their actions will further deplete the City’s housing supply by forcing small, “mom and pop” housing rental owners out of the industry.

**[Please state your opposition to the measure and explain why/how detrimental this measure would be on small rental property owners like yourself. See examples on the attached, Exhibit A.]**

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please call me at (\_\_\_\_)-\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or email me at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

*Your Name*

**Exhibit A- Additional Commentary on Empty Home Penalties or Vacancy Tax Policies**

1. It is true, and I **[we]** agree, homelessness in our community is a major problem, but the cause is not people that own apartment buildings. Eviction rates are extremely low in the City of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Evictions are very costly and time consuming. Housing providers are not in the eviction business. The causes of much of the homelessness in our area are the lack of wrap-around services, primarily mental health services and lack of homeless shelters. It is a community wide issue that needs to be solved by our community as a whole and not blamed and forcing the burden “on the backs” of one segment of our population, housing providers, just because we happen to own an apartment building.

The Council’s tax proposal is just another in the line of poorly thought out housing policies that will surely cause more property owners to exit the rental housing business and will create even greater housing shortages. Just look at major urban areas such as our own of San Francisco, or even cities such as Santa Monica and West Hollywood that have had strict rent controls in place for about 40 years. These areas are the most plagued with housing shortages and homeless populations. So, I ask, what good has your regulation done for us lately \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

1. I **[we]** strongly oppose the adoption of **[‘empty home penalties’ or ‘vacancy tax’]** measure. This measure is not only unnecessary in the Los Angeles area, with vacancy rate of only \_\_\_% to \_\_\_% but will also be ineffective in addressing the homeless issue in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What this proposal seeks to do is impose financial burdens on rental housing owners, who seek to provide affordable housing for their families and community members. There is no need to impose yet another regulation on the already tightly controlled rental market. Thus, rather than imposing taxes on responsible housing providers, I urge the Council to adopt a balanced approach to address the issue of homelessness in the City of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. You may ask why a housing provider would voluntarily deprive himself or herself of receiving rental income? The reason is that the hyper-regulations imposed upon property owners leaves us with no other choice. It is extremely costly, time consuming, and nearly impossible to remove a renter for any reason, even if for renovations or moving in the owner or his or her family member let alone for failure to pay rent. If one wishes to ask a renter to vacate, he or she would be required to remit extortion payments to the renters in the form of so-called “relocation benefits” that can cost upwards of $\_\_,000 or more. If the goal is to create more housing units to house people, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has other options at their disposal.