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**FLORIDA TENANTS AT RISK OF LOSING IMPORTANT PROTECTIONS
IF FLORIDA LAWMAKERS PASS PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

Tallahassee, FL – Legal services advocates and consumer protection groups have joined in opposition to legislation winding its way through the Florida legislature that would make sweeping changes to Florida’s Residential Landlord Tenant Act, most of it harming tenants.

HB 921 by Rep. Stargel and SB 1830 by Sen. Flores would undermine hard fought tenant protections that have been on the books for years. Several low points in the legislation for tenants include:

- Home buyers who enter into a contract for sale to buy their home would be subject to eviction as a tenant during the first 12 months of their contract unless they make a down payment of 5% of the value of the property.
- Rent will include late fees placing all tenants at risk of eviction if they cannot pay the late fee.
- Landlords will be permitted to accept part of the month’s rent and still evict the tenant – a provision subjecting tenants to abuse by unscrupulous landlords.
- Finally, landlords will no longer have to comply with statutory notices before evicting tenants – they will be allowed to fix the notice during the eviction process. This eviscerates the purpose for notices – to fairly and adequately advise tenants and help to avoid needless time of the courts in resolving issues.

Jeff Haynie, an attorney with Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, points out that “Florida law already makes it difficult for tenants to assert their rights and enforce their landlords’ obligations. The drastic changes advanced by this bill would further slant our landlord-tenant act toward landlords and put tenants at a huge disadvantage.”

HB 921 and SB 1830 are addressing problems that do not exist. In so doing, the changes will wreak havoc on many of the 5 million residential tenants in Florida. As the foreclosure crisis continues and many families are turning to renting homes, now is not the time to bring forward this litany of changes that act to erode tenant protections in Florida.

These groups join together in opposing HB 921 and SB 1830: Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Florida Consumer Action Network, Florida PIRG, Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Legal Advocacy Center of Central Florida, Florida Institutional Legal Services, Florida Legal Services