



To: Housing Authority of the City of Alameda Board of Commissioners

From: Hannah Flanery, Senior Staff Attorney/Clinical Supervisor, East Bay Community Law Center

Re: Public Comment, Submitted on Behalf of Denise Tellis

Meeting Date: March 18, 2026

Dear Board Members:

I am a Senior Staff Attorney/Clinical Supervisor at East Bay Community Law Center. I am writing on behalf of my client, Denise Tellis. As you may recall, I have written to this board on prior occasions to raise concerns about the treatment of program participants and tenants by the Housing Authority of the City of Alameda ("AHA") and its subsidiaries (e.g., the Alameda Affordable Housing Corporation ("AAHC")).

I write today to bring to the Board's attention a pattern of improper conduct by AAHC and AHA with respect to alleged rental debt asserted against Ms. Tellis, and to request that the Board promptly intervene to ensure that her tenant ledger is corrected, that unsupported charges are withdrawn, and that she is given a fair opportunity to satisfy any legitimate amount actually owed.

I first met Ms. Tellis in July 2025 at a mandatory settlement conference in an unlawful detainer (eviction) case filed against her by the Alameda Affordable Housing Corporation ("AAHC"). In that case, AAHC sued her for a mere \$207 in alleged unpaid rent. Ms. Tellis consistently maintained that she had paid her rent and did not owe AAHC that money. When AAHC finally produced its own ledger, it confirmed that she was correct. The case was dismissed. That lawsuit should never have been filed. It was frivolous and a waste of public resources.

Even after dismissing that case, AAHC continued to claim that Ms. Tellis owed back rent from years earlier. Yet AAHC refused, for nearly six months, to provide any ledger or accounting showing how that alleged debt arose. During that time, I repeatedly requested the ledger by email. Only after six months of persistent requests from our office was a ledger finally produced.

That ledger confirmed what Ms. Tellis had been saying all along. The alleged historical debt was not substantiated. The charges were listed as vague “accounts receivable” entries, without any clear explanation showing rent owed or any other legitimate debt.

Since then, I have sent four emails over the course of a month to Shelley Buchanan, counsel for AHA and AAHC, requesting that AAHC correct the ledger and remove these unsupported charges. Each one of those emails has been ignored; I have received no response or even acknowledgement of receipt.

Ms. Tellis is a single mother who has now fallen on hard times and does need assistance with a few months of actual rent, totaling a modest sum. I am in contact with a rental assistance agency that is willing to pay that amount. I have informed AAHC of this and explained that we cannot resolve the legitimate balance unless and until the unsupported charges are addressed. AAHC has refused to engage. While Ms. Tellis is trying to pay the actual balance owed, AAHC is refusing to cooperate.

Meanwhile, Ms. Tellis has experienced serious distress as a result of AAHC’s repeated claims that she owes unsubstantiated debt. AAHC first demanded payment of this alleged balance in the context of the earlier unlawful detainer case, threatening her with loss of housing and homelessness over money that she does not owe. It was only because of intervention from our office that Ms. Tellis learned those threats were hollow and unenforceable.

On other occasions, AAHC has also refused to accept Ms. Tellis’s rent when she attempted to pay it, based on claims that she owes rent she does not owe. This has caused needless confusion, fear, and stress.

No tenant should have to fight their housing authority just to get a clear accounting of what they supposedly owe. No tenant should be sued for rent that was in fact paid. And no tenant should be blocked from resolving a legitimate balance because a public agency refuses to correct unsupported charges in its accounting.

I ask this Board to direct AHA (i.e., AAHC) staff to do three things immediately: first, remove the unsupported charges from Ms. Tellis’s ledger; second, provide a clear and accurate accounting of any actual rent owed; and third, work in good faith with Ms. Tellis and the rental assistance agency so that the legitimate balance can be paid and this matter can finally be resolved.

Please note that Ms. Tellis is but one of many tenants our agency and sister organizations have met who are dealing with the type of issues raised here. Other tenants are reluctant to come forward as Ms. Tellis has done here, either due to privacy concerns or due to fears of retaliation. As I have informed this board before, my own experience working with AHA and AAHC on behalf of more than a dozen tenants has led me to believe these fears of retaliation are well-founded.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.