

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

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July 28, 2022

Ms. Jaime Masters
Commissioner
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
P.O. Box 149030
Austin, TX 78714

Dear Ms. Masters:

For the past year, the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis has been investigating four large corporate landlords that filed a large number of eviction actions during the first 16 months of the coronavirus pandemic. One of these corporate landlords was the Siegel Group (Siegel), which is based in Las Vegas, Nevada, and operates three apartment complexes in the state of Texas with a total of 670 rental units.¹ Today the Select Subcommittee is releasing the enclosed staff report on our findings. Included in this report is evidence that false reports of child abuse and neglect—a felony criminal offense in Texas²—may have been submitted to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) by Siegel employees against tenants they sought to coerce to leave their homes.

As the report details, a Siegel executive, apparently unable to lawfully evict certain tenants because of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) eviction moratorium then in effect, suggested in an email that managers of a San Antonio apartment building check “How many occupants are there in the unit. If there are too many and some are kids we can call Child Protective Services to come out.”³ While the email does not specify what the managers should

¹ Letter from Chairman James E. Clyburn, Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, to Stephen Siegel, the Siegel Group (July 19, 2021) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/news/letters/clyburn-investigate-pandemic-evictions-corporate-landlords>); Apartments.com, *Siegel Suites San Antonio* (online at www.apartments.com/siegel-suites-san-antonio-san-antonio-tx/2pdq3eb/) (accessed July 22, 2022); Apartments.com, *Siegel Select Dallas* (online at www.apartments.com/siegel-select-dallas-dallas-tx/42pe3nl/) (accessed July 22, 2022); Apartments.com, *Siegel Suites Houston* (online at www.apartments.com/siegel-suites-houston-houston-tx/179qfkg/) (accessed July 22, 2022).

² Title 5 Tex. Code § 261.107 (Referring to reports to the Department of Family and Protective Services the Texas Family code states that “A person commits an offense if, with the intent to deceive, the person knowingly makes a report as provided in this chapter that is false. An offense under this subsection is a state jail felony unless it is shown on the trial of the offense that the person has previously been convicted under this section, in which case the offense is a felony of the third degree.”).

³ Email from Senior Vice President for Operations, Siegel Suites and Siegel Select, to Regional Manager and San Antonio Property Manager, Siegel Suites (May 21, 2021) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/5.21.21%20SVP%20to%20managers%20re%20san%20antonio%20list.pdf>).

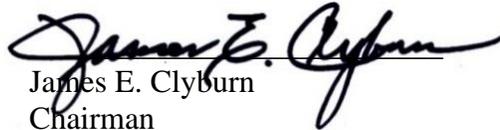
Ms. Jamie Masters

Page 2

tell Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of DFPS, it is my understanding that a child simply living in an apartment with “too many occupants” does not constitute a legitimate basis for making any sort of report that would cause DFPS personnel “to come out.”⁴ This incongruity, particularly given that making such a call was presented in the email as one of the executive’s “list of things” he uses to force tenants out, raises the concern that intentional misrepresentations may have been made by Siegel employees, potentially in multiple instances, to induce DFPS to investigate.

While the Select Subcommittee cannot confirm whether any calls to CPS were in fact made, I respectfully request that DFPS evaluate whether any false reports of child abuse or neglect were submitted by Siegel employees and refer any such instances for law enforcement investigation.

Sincerely,


James E. Clyburn
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Steve Scalise, Ranking Member

⁴ Title 5 Tex. Code § 261.001(4)(ii)(c) includes in the definition of “neglect” “the failure to provide a child with . . . shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused[.]” Particularly given that these tenants were behind on rent, which Siegel was well aware of, the scenario described in the executive’s email does not constitute neglect.