

****OPEN LETTER TO CALIFORNIA ATTORNEY GENERAL ROB BONTA:
WHEN SLUMLORDS ARE REWARDED AND TENANTS ARE
ABANDONED****



By Journalist Malik Washington
Destination Freedom Media Group and the Davis Vanguard

Attorney General Rob Bonta,

This is not a sudden crisis. It is a documented one.

For decades, tenants in San Francisco's most historically Black and working-class neighborhoods—the Fillmore, Bayview–Hunters Point, Sunnydale, and beyond—have endured unsafe housing conditions, prolonged neglect, and retaliation after speaking out, while the City of San Francisco continues to do business with the very corporate landlords accused of mistreating them [1][3][12].

This letter asks a question that can no longer be deferred:

Why does the City of San Francisco continue to reward corporate housing operators with multimillion-dollar contracts when the public record shows repeated mistreatment of tenants?

And if City Hall will not act, why should the State wait any longer?

THE FILLMORE: A HISTORY THE CITY CANNOT DENY

Long before Bayview–Hunters Point became the epicenter of today's housing crisis, Fillmore tenants were sounding the alarm.

Residents in the Fillmore District have for years raised grievances involving mold, plumbing failures, pest infestations, and prolonged delays in repairs at properties

managed by the John Stewart Company, a major affordable-housing operator with longstanding contractual relationships with the City of San Francisco [3][4].

These concerns reached far beyond tenant meetings.
They entered the city's mainstream press.

The San Francisco Chronicle has described John Stewart as a “slumlord” in its reporting, based on persistent tenant complaints, code violations, and prolonged habitability failures [3].

The City knew then.
The City knows now.

BAYVIEW–HUNTERS POINT AND ALICE GRIFFITH: DIFFERENT SITES, SAME STORY

At Alice Griffith Apartments, tenants have for years reported chronic mold, pest infestations, plumbing failures, and extended delays in maintenance, even as the property became the centerpiece of one of San Francisco's largest redevelopment efforts [1][12].

Residents describe living in unstable and unhealthy conditions while being told to wait for future promises tied to redevelopment timelines. These complaints mirror those raised by tenants in nearby Related-managed properties, including Bayview Apartments, LaSalle, Shoreview, and All Hallows [1].

In August 2025, the San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper documented missing windows, broken locks, destroyed personal property, and substandard renovations across these properties [1].

Following months of community pressure, Mayor Daniel Lurie personally toured these properties, where residents showed him units with persistent mildew, faulty installations, and unfinished repairs [1].

At that point, ignorance was no longer plausible.

Yet tenants report that conditions persist, while the same corporate actors continue to receive public approvals and redevelopment opportunities.

RELATED COMPANIES: A NATIONAL PATTERN, NOT A LOCAL ACCIDENT

Related Companies is one of the largest real-estate developers in the United States, controlling tens of thousands of residential units across more than 20 states—many designated as affordable or subsidized housing [16].

National investigative reporting has documented:

- Two-tier treatment of affordable housing tenants in Related developments such as Hudson Yards in New York [5][6];
- Aggressive eviction filings, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, as documented by ProPublica [7]; and
- Persistent habitability complaints in subsidized housing that require sustained public pressure before action is taken [5][7]

When tenants across states describe the same failures—mold, leaks, pests, broken windows—the issue is systemic, not anecdotal.

CITY HALL’S RESPONSE: LIMITED AUTHORITY, UNLIMITED CONTRACTS

Mayor Daniel Lurie has stated that the City has limited authority over private housing operators. That explanation collapses under scrutiny when those same companies continue to receive public subsidies, tax credits, land-use approvals, and redevelopment contracts [12][16].

Authority may not be absolute.
But leverage clearly exists.
Tenants in the Fillmore learned this years ago.
Bayview–Hunters Point is learning it again now.

THE EXCEPTION: SUPERVISOR SHAMANN WALTON AND COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

In contrast to City Hall’s broader inaction, District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton has consistently elevated tenant grievances and demanded accountability for housing conditions in Bayview–Hunters Point. His staff, including Percy Birch, have engaged directly with residents rather than deflecting complaints into bureaucratic limbo. Their advocacy proves a critical point: abandonment is a policy choice, not a necessity.

RETALIATION AFTER SPEAKING OUT

When tenants and advocates go public, the response too often shifts from neglect to pressure.

In Bayview–Hunters Point, communications from senior management at Related—sent after investigative reporting—raised concerns about retaliation and intimidation, including reliance on unverified security narratives and attempts to shift enforcement responsibility onto tenant advocates.

California law protects tenant organizing and speech. Conduct that chills those rights demands scrutiny under state and federal housing protections [8][9].

WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY LOOKS LIKE

California has already demonstrated what real enforcement looks like.

In 2025, your office sued PAMA Management, alleging widespread habitability violations, deceptive leases, discrimination against voucher holders, and unlawful rent practices affecting thousands of low-income tenants [9][10].

That case followed years of ignored complaints—until the State intervened.
The parallels are unmistakable.

Fillmore.
Bayview–Hunters Point.
Alice Griffith.
Related California.
John Stewart Company.
Different names. Same harm. Same communities.

THE QUESTION THAT DEMANDS AN ANSWER

Why does the City of San Francisco continue to reward corporate housing operators with multimillion-dollar contracts when the evidence shows repeated mistreatment of tenants [3][12]?

And does the City look the other way because those bearing the cost are poor, marginalized, and historically excluded?

If local government will not answer with enforcement, the responsibility now rests with the State.

ATTORNEY GENERAL BONTA, THE RECORD IS COMPLETE

This is not about politics.
It is about equal protection under the law.
The evidence is public.
The patterns are documented.
The harm is ongoing.
Housing is not a favor.
It is a human right.
And rights demand action—now.

PRINT-READY FOOTNOTES

[1] Griffin Jones, “Missing windows, broken locks: Hunters Point residents come home after renovations”, San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper, Aug. 19, 2025.
<https://sfbayview.com>

[2] San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper, Bayview–Hunters Point housing coverage.
<https://sfbayview.com>

[3] San Francisco Chronicle, reporting on tenant complaints and management failures involving the John Stewart Company.
<https://www.sfchronicle.com>

[4] Mission Local, housing and tenant-rights reporting involving major affordable housing operators.
<https://missionlocal.org>

[5] Ginia Bellafante, “At Hudson Yards, the Poor Door Is Hard to Miss”, New York Times, Apr. 16, 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/16/nyregion/hudson-yards-affordable-housing.html>

[6] THE CITY (NY), “Luxury Living at Hudson Yards, but Affordable Tenants Say They’re Treated Differently”, Feb. 11, 2020.
<https://www.thecity.nyc/2020/2/11/21210427/hudson-yards-affordable-housing-poor-door>

[7] ProPublica, “Landlords Filed Thousands of Evictions During COVID Despite Aid”, 2021.
<https://www.propublica.org/article/landlords-filed-thousands-of-evictions-during-covid>

[8] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Fair Housing & Tenant Protections.
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp

[9] California Department of Justice, Attorney General Bonta Sues Notorious Landlord Mike Nijjar and PAMA Management, June 12, 2025.
<https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-bonta-sues-notorious-landlord-mike-nijjar-and-pama-management>

[10] People of the State of California v. Nijjar et al., Complaint (2025).
https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/Complaint_7.pdf

[11] NYC Open Data, Housing Court Records.
<https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us>

[12] San Francisco Department of Building Inspection, Housing Inspection Records.
<https://sf.gov/departments/departments-building-inspection>

[13] National Housing Law Project, Corporate Landlord Research.
<https://www.nhlp.org>

[14] Urban Institute, Corporate Ownership & Affordable Housing Research.
<https://www.urban.org>

[15] ACCE Institute, Corporate Landlord Accountability Reports.
<https://www.acceinstitute.org>

[16] Related Companies, Corporate Overview.
<https://www.related.com/about>

Malik and Gale Washington are the co-founders of Destination Freedom Media Group. Approximately one month ago Malik and Gale attended a community meeting at the Southeast Community Center in the Bayview neighborhood in San Francisco. At that meeting, they heard firsthand accounts which described the mistreatment and neglect tenants suffered at the hands of Related Companies. Malik and Gale are honored to amplify the voices and the struggles of community members living in District 10 and are committed to serving all populations in the City of San Francisco and beyond. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Malik Washington is an investigative journalist and co-founder of Destination Freedom Media Group, an independent nonprofit newsroom dedicated to accountability reporting at the intersection of civil rights, public integrity, and community survival. He has been a published journalist for over 14 years.

His work—published in partnership with the Davis Vanguard—focuses on government power, criminal justice, environmental justice, and the human consequences of policy decisions too often insulated from public scrutiny. Washington's reporting amplifies the voices of impacted communities while insisting on documentary evidence, transparency, and the unvarnished truth—especially when institutions demand silence.

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