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PRESS RELEASE

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Alameda County Supervisors Pass Ordinance Prohibiting Smoking in Multi-Unit Residences

Initiative Aimed at Preventing Secondhand Smoke in Unincorporated Area of the County

Oakland – The Alameda County Board of Supervisors today unanimously passed an ordinance prohibiting smoking in multi-unit residences located in the County’s Unincorporated Areas. The result of three years of discussion and community advocacy, the ordinance is designed to reduce the negative impacts of secondhand smoke while addressing health inequities among vulnerable County residents.

The ordinance will take effect July 1, 2022, at which point smoking will be prohibited inside apartments, townhomes, condominiums, senior/assisted living/long-term care facilities, hotels, and any other residence with two or more units. Smoking will also not be allowed in common areas indoors and outdoors, or within 25 feet of any doorway, window, vent, or other opening into a residence. The ordinance will apply within the Urban Growth Boundary encompassing Ashland, Cherryland, Fairview, Hayward Acres, Castro Valley, and San Lorenzo.

The ordinance is designed to protect residents from secondhand smoke, which is linked to numerous smoking-related diseases and can increase the risks of respiratory infections and COVID-19 symptoms – especially as more individuals are forced to stay home due to the pandemic. In addition, the ordinance seeks to remedy significant health inequities facing the County’s most vulnerable residents, as multi-unit occupants are far more likely to be people of color, lower-income, and/or uninsured when compared to single-family homeowners.

“I represent some of the most at-risk residents of our County, with shorter life expectancies, poorer health outcomes and higher rates of asthma and other respiratory challenges,” said District 4 Supervisor Nate Miley. “Today’s action represents a collaboration between advocates, community members, health experts and property owners and is one step closer to cleaner air in our homes.”

“Today’s passage of the multi-unit smoke free ordinance sends a powerful message to our unincorporated community that their health and wellbeing are of the utmost

importance to the County,” said District 3 Supervisor Dave Brown. “As we continue to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, I appreciate the work of our Public Health Department to help ensure the safety of our residents during this difficult time.”

Once the ordinance is in effect, tenants found to be in violation will receive up to three notices from the County’s Public Health Department (ACPHD) offering information and smoking cessation resources. If after these warnings smoking violations continue, the County’s Community Development Agency (CDA) may issue fines for additional violations, beginning with a \$100 fine for a first violation in a three-year period, \$200 for a second violation, and \$500 for a third. Residents who have received three warnings and three fines would also be subject to eviction at the discretion of their landlord.

With the passage of the ordinance, the Unincorporated Area joins Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, and Emeryville as County jurisdictions requiring smoke-free multi-unit housing. Unincorporated Area residents who have participated in the public County process around drafting the ordinance have expressed overwhelming support for making multi-unit residences smoke-free. In 2020, a La Familia survey of Eden Area residents in unincorporated Alameda County reported that 93% of respondents have smelled smoke or vape aerosols inside their unit or on the property.

“This Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing Ordinance will change the lives of those suffering from secondhand smoke now and will contribute to a healthier, more equitable, living standard for future generations to come,” said Jade Le, Program Manager with La Familia. “The Board of Supervisors are setting a precedent for safe, smoke-free living with such a comprehensive policy.”