



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

Edward A. Kelly
General President

Frank V. Lima
General Secretary-Treasurer

September 15, 2025

Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

City Council,

The Single Stair Initiative (SSI), currently before the Los Angeles City Council, circumvents and removes important life safety features in multi-story residential buildings. The proposal will decrease critical life-safety components in future dwellings. In emergency situations, all building occupants would be forced to escape through a single stairwell – the same stairwell fire fighters will also need to use for fire rescue and suppression.

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) has been a fierce opponent of these short-sighted efforts, which are dangerous to the public and our responding fire fighters. We refer to them as ‘**only** one way out’ designs.

We understand and support the need for additional affordable housing, but it must be safe housing. **The removal of a second stairway as an emergency exit – a critical life safety feature – is not an acceptable trade-off for additional housing.** Without the proper, data-driven research, the SSL is an experiment carried out on some of the city’s most vulnerable - children, families, tenants, and firefighters.

Proponents have not produced evidence of a resolution for the impact of residents escaping and fire fighters utilizing the same stairwell, in different directions, which will, without a doubt, cause congestion and time-critical delays. For residents, evacuation will be impacted. For fire fighters, fire attack and search and rescue will be delayed when seconds count most. The Single Stairway Initiative is a deadly gamble.

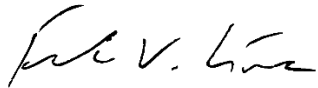
Before you cast a vote on a definite life and death issue, ask yourself, are fire deaths acceptable? Fire safety codes are built on experience, and they exist because lives have been lost; weakening or removing them repeats history and puts lives at risk. Circumventing public safety standards is not the answer to affordable housing. The proponents of SSI have an overreliance on fire protection systems (alarms and sprinklers) to perform flawlessly, which will leave occupants vulnerable. They also assume that residents will completely evacuate before fire fighters arrive – ignoring real incidents where residents are trapped. I can tell you from my experience that relying on residents to self-rescue is dangerous. In 1993, I responded to the 330 Burlington fire, where I witnessed people jumping from the upper floors of a building to escape after their self-rescue failed. Ten people died in that fire. SSL would put us on an unnecessary course to repeat that tragedy.

Reliance on fire fighters to perform window rescues from ladders is not a viable alternative to a second means of egress. These are among the most dangerous tactics for both occupants and fire fighters. Aerial ladder apparatus access is often blocked by cars, high tension wires, alleys, bike lanes, and/or building design, making our reliance on ground ladders the only path to rescue for many trapped victims, and regular ground ladders cannot reach above the third floor, leaving those on upper floors stranded. This problem becomes even greater when a single stairway is blocked by fire or inaccessible to residents trying to escape.

Our fire fighters are the experts when it comes to fire safety. Based on experience and professional knowledge, fire fighters strongly oppose the Single Stairway Initiative and encourage you not to adopt the proposal.

Thank you for your consideration of this important public safety matter,

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank V. Lima". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Frank V. Lima
General Secretary-Treasurer, International Association of Fire Fighters.

CC:
Mayor Karen Bass
City Attorney Hydee Feldstein-Soto
Interim Fire Chief Ronnie Villanueva
Board of Fire Commissioners