



March 18, 2025

Rhode Island House Committee on Judiciary:

RE: **SUPPORT: H5503** the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act and **SUPPORT: H5916** Fair and Just Notice

We are writing on behalf of our organizations, which include thousands of your constituents. DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality) and the George Wiley Center both have many members who are directly impacted by housing insecurity and the lack of affordable housing in Providence, Pawtucket, and across the state.

We appreciate your support of **H5503**, the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, which prohibits arbitrary eviction and prevents displacement, discrimination, and retaliation. Month-to-month leases bring uncertainty to the lives of countless tenants and implementing just cause eviction protections would effectively halt this destabilizing practice. Rent increases higher than the rate of wage growth first force tenants to become rent-burdened, possibly putting off other essential expenses. Then, such rent increases function to evict otherwise contract-abiding tenants. Year-to-year rent increases would be capped at 4% absent a demonstrably greater rise in landlord costs. The prohibition on arbitrary eviction deters its use as a retaliatory tactic to undermine tenants' unions and other exercises of tenants' rights.

It is important to recognize that arbitrary evictions not only disrupt the lives of tenants but also exacerbate housing instability, contributing to a cycle of poverty and homelessness. It is disheartening that in 2024, 1194 evictions have been filed for reasons unrelated to non-payment of rent, with countless unreported move-outs following arbitrary terminations. Thank you for help in addressing housing precarity in Rhode Island by supporting H5503.

Also please support H5916. With your support, Fair Notice became law last year in Rhode Island. Rhode Island families who rent deserve more than 30 days' notice if landlords want to terminate their lease. When the past Fair Notice bill, passed we acknowledged that the current rental market is unlike the market that existed, so tenants need more than thirty days' notice to find a new home. The intent of Fair Notice was and is clear: people need more time to figure out what to do when their rent is increased so they might avoid becoming unhoused or avoid entering an unstable housing situation. This bill will improve conditions for renters when it is passed. House Bill 5916 makes the notification about termination of tenancy the same as our Fair Notice requirements that were passed into law last year. That means 60 days for most renters and 120 days for renters 62 and older.

We recognize that people need more time when faced with a rent increase, and we also need more time to deal with a termination of tenancy. We support making the requirements the same across the board. Making these important changes will provide the most stability and predictability for tenants, while safeguarding limited judicial resources because tenants will be able to move before an eviction filing becomes necessary. It is right thing to do here is to close the loophole created by the difference in notice requirements.

We call on the Rhode Island House Committee on Judiciary to stand with renters and support these bills, as steps in the right direction towards an equitable housing market in Rhode Island. Thank you for your support for **H5503** the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act and **H5916** the Fair and Just Notice Act.

Sincerely,

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and

Camilo Viveiros, George Wiley Center