

Chairman Robert Craven, Sr. and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am a former landlord who supports House bill #5503.

This bill would establish just-cause eviction protections for tenants.

This is a small step, but for so many of our tenants in the state this would help them from being evicted for arbitrary reasons.

As a former landlord, I came to know tenants who were afraid to complain about anything wrong with their apartments, for fear of eviction. In Rhode Island, it is very easy – too easy – to evict a tenant.

I also knew landlords who would do this. Tenants who would complain about legitimate things, like appliances not working, or the heat not working. Landlords would then either drastically raise the rent on a tenant and evict them, or find another simple reason – and evict them. And evictions go on tenants record, making it hard for them to get another apartment.

Sometimes laws are unjust.

To evict so easily – too easily -- is unjust.

Approving bill #5503 will help some. Maybe even save a life.

I can tell you that there are evicted people living in unheated garages and vacant buildings as I write this.

Let's please make this small change to the law.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Gerry Willis

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