

Roberta DiMezza

From: Mary Ulrich Budlong <user@votervoice.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 11:45 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: OPPOSE H5503 JUST CAUSE & RENT CONTROL

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Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

I am against S2920, which proposes implementing just cause eviction laws and rent control measures. This bill not only removes a property owner's ability to serve a non-renewal notice to a resident at lease term's end, effectively granting residents a perpetual lease, but also imposes rent control with a maximum annual increase of 4%. Economists widely have found that, while rent-control policies do stunt the increase in rents, rent control also leads to a reduction of rental stock and maintenance, thereby exacerbating affordable housing shortages.

Although I acknowledge worries about the unjust removal of long-standing residents, I am convinced that this strategy is not the correct course of action and will adversely affect both property owners and residents. Advocates of just cause eviction argue that it shields long-time residents from unethical landlords. However, these constraints significantly curtail property owners' capacity to promptly tackle resident issues and expel disruptive or potentially harmful individuals. Such measures unsettle rental communities, clash with state laws addressing problematic properties, and deter investment in rental housing.

Under just cause eviction, housing providers can only evict residents for reasons explicitly listed in the law. While these protections seem reasonable, they hinder property owners from efficiently managing their properties. The bill mandates landlords to "show cause" and obtain a court order to terminate a lease, particularly challenging in cases involving criminal activities. This policy shifts the responsibility of providing proof and evidence of such activity to neighboring tenants. Most often, neighboring tenants have concerns with retaliation from problem tenants and may be uprooted from their own home out of fear. This scenario can be avoided when a landlord is free to exercise their rights and swiftly act.

Additional eviction and turnover is very costly. Property owners do not want to overzealously evict. The intention of a property owner is to generally attract stable, long-term, tenants, which means less loss due to vacancy and turnover costs which are in the thousands. It is untruthful to portray landlords as people who intend to remove people from their homes at any chance.

Evictions In Rhode Island have decreased 18% on average in comparison to an average year before the pandemic (this includes Providence) and only 1/5 eviction filings are for reasons other than non-payment of rent. This suggests that most eviction filings are for non-payment of rent, and not unjustly force someone to leave their home. It is also worthy to note that filings do not always translate to executions (granted evictions).

I am afraid that policies such as the one set forth in H5503 could have the potential to counteract many of the positive housing policies that have been set forth in Speaker Shekarchi's housing package. As a state we must move in the direction of finding ways to work together and solving problems, rather than shifting blame and punishment amongst different parties. Please consider the detrimental impacts H5503 as well as any and all just cause and rent control bills would have. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mary Ulrich Budlong
107 Amesbury Cir
Middletown, RI 02842
mub62@verizon.net