



Members of House Judiciary Committee

Rhode Island General Assembly

Re: In Support of H5503 – Just Cause Evictions for Residential Landlord Tenancies

March 18, 2025

Dear Members of House Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on tenant protections in Rhode Island. My name is Dr. Molly Richard. I am a social scientist and teacher at Boston University and a resident of East Providence. My research focuses on homelessness and housing, and I'm here to share what the evidence says about Just Cause Eviction policies.

- In the past five years, homelessness in Rhode Island has doubled—now nearly 2,500 people on a single night, with over 500 living unsheltered.¹
- The costs of inaction are high: Homelessness worsens health, increases emergency service use, and deepens poverty. It's linked to premature death for adults and long-term hardship for children.²
- We're in an affordable housing crisis by all measures, not just looking at those experiencing homelessness. Nearly half of all renters meet the federal definition of cost burdened.³
- Producing more housing is critical but so is preventing avoidable evictions that push people into housing insecurity and homelessness. A 2024 study in the Quarterly Economic Journal shows eviction increases homelessness, hospital visits, and reduces both earnings and spending on durable goods.⁴
- Just Cause Eviction policies like the one under discussion today are designed to help prevent unfair and arbitrary evictions.⁵
- 8 states and 24 localities have good cause laws – with Colorado and New York having passed their new tenant protections within the last year.⁶
- Research shows that Just Cause eviction policies do what they intend to—prevent these kinds of evictions and mitigate displacement for low-income households.⁷
- There is no evidence suggesting that they make legal evictions (like for non-payment of rent, lease violation, or property damage) any harder. In RI, 85% of evictions are for these valid reasons and would be unaffected by this bill.⁸
- Some argue that Just Cause would disincentivize developers from building new rental housing. However, there is no research that indicates this is true. In fact, new research from prominent urban scholars and economists at the University of Minnesota and Loyola University find no measurable negative impact on housing production. They used difference in difference design, a gold standard in economics, to show that trends in housing production in counties in California, Oregon, and New Hampshire where Just Cause Eviction had been enacted, were no different than trends in similar, nearby counties in states without these policies.⁹
- So, the research we have suggests that Just Cause Eviction can mitigate eviction, residential instability, and indirectly, homelessness—with no evidence of negative consequences on housing construction or overall ability to evict tenants in violation of their lease.



- Additionally, Just Cause Eviction policies must include some level of rent stabilization to prevent extreme increases that indirectly force tenants out while still abiding by the law. I also want to emphasize that despite common myths, recent, rigorous research on rent control shows no significant effect on the construction of new housing¹⁰. In fact, some even suggest that moderate rent stabilization can incentivize developers to produce at greater scale, rather than focus on profiting only on the limited existing housing stock.¹¹
- Finally, research shows that every \$100 increase in median rent is associated with a 9% rise in homelessness and a 30% rise in unsheltered homelessness.¹² Homelessness is a housing problem¹³ and a public health emergency.

We should use every legislative tool available to keep Rhode Islanders housed. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Molly Richard, PhD,

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References:

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³ Housing Supply and Homelessness in Rhode Island (2023). Rhode Island Foundation. <https://rifoundation.org/news/housing-supply-and-homelessness-in-rhode-island>

⁴ Collinson, R., Humphries, J. E., Mader, N., Reed, D., Tannenbaum, D., & Van Dijk, W. (2024). Eviction and poverty in American cities. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 139(1), 57-120.

⁵ Cuéllar, J. (2019). Effect of “just cause” eviction ordinances on eviction in four California cities. *Journal of Public & International Affairs*, 30, 4.

⁶ National Low Income Housing Coalition. (Updated 2025). State and Local Tenant Protections Database. <https://nlihc.org/tenant-protections>

⁷ Chapple, K., Loukaitou-Sideris, A., Miller, A., & Zeger, C. (2023). The role of local housing policies in preventing displacement: A literature review. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 38(2), 200-214.; Hwang, J., Zhang, I., Jeon, J. S., Chapple, K., Greenberg, J., & Shrimali, B. 2022. “Research Brief: Who Benefits from Tenant Protections? The Effects of Rent Stabilization and Just Cause for Evictions on Residential Mobility in the Bay Area.”



https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ebc6a5493ebe43c8bd9518e/t/622ff5be4c6e1e75933f7945/1647310272596/Brief_Who+Benefits+From+Tenant+Protections.pdf

⁸ Eviction data compiled by ReclaimRI:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wVJrwl9SFOVB71Siewj0vu6A5q9kCu8f/view>

⁹ Card, K., Davis, E., Goetz, E., & Schwartz, J. (2025, March 3). *The good case for “good cause”: Do good cause eviction protections reduce the rate of housing production?* Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota. <https://www.cura.umn.edu/research/good-case-good-cause-do-good-cause-eviction-protections-reduce-rate-housing-production>

¹⁰ Jofre-Monseny, Jordi, Rodrigo Martínez-Mazza, and Mariona Segú. “Effectiveness and Supply Effects of High-Coverage Rent Control Policies.” *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 101 (July 1, 2023): 103916. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2023.103916>

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¹² U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2020). *Homelessness: Better HUD oversight of data collection could improve estimates of homeless population* (GAO-20-433). <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-433>; Richard, M. K. (In press). Homelessness and race: The impact of structural conditions on Black, White, and Latine homelessness. Accepted for publication in *Social Problems*

¹³ Colburn, G., & Aldern, C. P. (2022). *Homelessness is a housing problem*. University of California Press.