

Testimony of Nicholas Clampitt, Outreach Team Member
Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere
H 5503: Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act

Representatives of the State of Rhode Island:

My name is Nicholas Clampitt and I am a member of the Outreach team in Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere. I am writing this letter to express my strongest support for H 5503, the proposed amendment for Just Cause Evictions.

As a part of our Outreach team, I provide provisions such as food, water, sleeping bags, and tents to individuals within the community who need them most. Many of these individuals experience homelessness or precarious housing situations as they struggle to make ends meet. Even among those who are housed, it is not uncommon to hear of (or witness) substandard living conditions that tenants feel powerless to challenge. There is deep-rooted fear that even raising the question of said standards may lead to an eviction notice on their doorstep.

No one is insulated from eviction—I myself have experienced several. However, while some have the resources to recover, far too many do not. A [study](#) from the Tobin Center at Yale found that evictions drive up shelter use, hospital visits, and economic instability, with especially harsh consequences for Black and female tenants. An eviction is greater than any one tenant or family when it strains our public and social services. If our state is serious in its commitment to preventing homelessness and protecting our citizens, we must prevent unjust evictions.

The causes of homelessness are multidimensional, cutting across time and space. However, the causes of unjust evictions are not. Landlords act as gatekeepers to housing, able to grant or deny access at will. With such control over a basic necessity, we must ensure there are safeguards in place to prevent abuse and exploitation from taking place.

I wanted to underscore the importance that an act such as this could have in the lives of individuals existing at the margins of our society. The passage of this act will directly protect low-income and vulnerable tenants in Rhode Island from being exploited, abused, and displaced. By protecting tenants, we will give them the stability they need to work, build families, and contribute to their communities—in a word, to live.

I implore you all to vote in favor of this act, and to do your part in protecting the people who need it most. And I assure you all that your actions today will not go unnoticed.

Sincerely,
Nicholas Clampitt
Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere