

## Testimony in Support of H 5676

House Judiciary Committee

Submitted by Kristen Billings

March 18, 2025

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

The Rhode Island Center for Justice submits this written testimony in support of passage of H 5676. The Center for Justice practices landlord tenant law and is one of two organizations in the state that represents tenants in substantial numbers. Each year we represent over 1,000 Rhode Islanders in court proceedings and advise thousands more about their rights under state and federal law. Through this work, we have become intimately familiar with the struggles faced by Rhode Islanders as they navigate a difficult housing market.

As I am sure you are aware, currently the only requirement for rental increases in Rhode Island is to provide 60 days written notice for month to month tenants under the age of 62, and 120 days written notice for those over the age of 62. Under that structure, a tenant under the age of 62 can go from paying \$1500 to \$2000 with a mere 60 days notice. While this example may seem farfetched, these are the type of increases we have personally witnessed working with tenants across the state of Rhode Island. This creates an impossible situation for low income tenants, who are forced to attempt to pay a rental increase at a rate they know is unmanageable or take on the difficult and costly task of moving to a new unit.

Providence currently stands out as a notable example of skyrocketing rental prices. As recently reported by the Providence Journal, Providence experienced the highest year-over-year increase in rent price in the nation, with median rents rising 16.18% between March 2023 and March 2024, reaching \$2,618<sup>1</sup>. According to Rent, an apartment marketing website cited by the Providence Journal, rents in Providence have climbed 27% over the last three years<sup>2</sup>, reflecting a market that continues to price Rhode Island families out of safe and stable housing.

We are all well aware of the fact of the ongoing housing crisis, yet there are still minimal protections for tenants to keep them stably housed. HB 5676 would provide a modest limit on rental increases that would both allow landlords to increase rent as necessary and provide

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/2024/04/24/providence-ri-rent-prices-housing-report/73367621007/?itm\\_campaign=confirmation&itm\\_content=news&itm\\_medium=onsite&itm\\_source=onsite](https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/2024/04/24/providence-ri-rent-prices-housing-report/73367621007/?itm_campaign=confirmation&itm_content=news&itm_medium=onsite&itm_source=onsite)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rent.com/research/average-rent-price-report/>

security and predictability for tenants. Knowing the maximum amount your rent will increase over a 12 month period allows tenants to plan for a rental increase in advance and have time to make necessary changes to accommodate the rental rate increase or find alternative housing.

We encourage this committee to recommend passage of this important protection. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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