

## **Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 5677**

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 5677, which would increase the financial threshold allowing landlords to require up to four months of rent upfront—including first and last month's rent, as well as a security deposit equivalent to two months' rent. As a behavioral health clinician, I have seen firsthand how financial barriers to housing can trap individuals in unsafe living situations, and I urge you to reject this bill to protect Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents.

In my work, I have been shocked by how many of my clients remain in abusive households simply because they lack the funds to leave. For survivors of domestic violence, economic insecurity is often a primary factor preventing them from escaping harm. When someone is facing threats to their physical or mental well-being at home, the ability to secure safe and stable housing can mean the difference between freedom and continued victimization. This bill would push safe housing further out of reach for those who need it most by making it significantly more expensive to secure a rental unit.

The reality is that many Rhode Islanders are already struggling to afford housing. Rent prices continue to rise, and many individuals and families live paycheck to paycheck. Under this proposed legislation, a prospective tenant seeking an apartment at \$1,500 per month could be required to provide a staggering \$6,000 just to move in. This is an insurmountable financial burden for many low-income individuals, including those escaping domestic violence, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness.

Furthermore, this bill exacerbates the existing inequities in our housing system. Those with financial privilege will continue to access housing with ease, while those without disposable income will face additional hurdles that keep them in cycles of poverty, instability, and danger. Safe housing is a basic human right. I ask you to reject legislation that prioritizes landlords' financial gain over tenants' basic survival.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose House Bill 5677. Instead of increasing barriers to housing, we should be working to expand access to safe, stable, and affordable homes for all Rhode Islanders. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Talbutt (Providence)