



March 18, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chairman  
House Judiciary Committee  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re. H.5917, An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act  
H.5918, An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act

Dear Chairman Craven:

The undersigned members of the Rhode Island Business Coalition are writing to express our strong support for House bill 5917 and House bill 5918. We thank Representative Casey for introducing these bills that would take steps toward addressing the growing challenges related to affordable housing and public health concerns in our state.

As the members of this Committee know well, the rising cost of housing is one of the most pressing issues facing Rhode Island's residents and businesses. In fact, according to a poll released today by Neighbors Welcome! Rhode Island, 59 percent of respondents listed the cost of housing as the most important issue facing Rhode Islanders today.

With limited affordable housing options, businesses are struggling to recruit and retain talent, while employees are increasingly burdened by high housing costs. Together, these bills look to address the requirements of the statewide rental registry that many property owners are finding difficult to meet in the established timeframes.

In addition to housing affordability, we also recognize the importance of addressing the health and safety of residents living in older properties. H.5917 and H.5918 both propose changing the law to apply to properties built before 1978, when lead-based paints were commonly used. While the intent of this bill is to protect the health of our residents, especially young children, there are concerns regarding its practical implementation, particularly in relation to a shortage of qualified inspectors and privacy considerations.

As a business community, we strongly support the efforts to reduce lead exposure, but we ask the Committee to consider the following:

- **Shortage of Inspectors** - The lack of qualified inspectors, along with the demand for inspections under law have led to delays in compliance and increased costs for property owners, ultimately

The Rhode Island Business Coalition represents 50 industries and 6,280 businesses that employ 231,200 people throughout Rhode Island.

affecting the availability of affordable housing. H.5917 delays imposition of fines for lack of compliance until October 1, 2025.

- **Privacy Concerns** - There are legitimate concerns regarding the scope of personal information required to be posted on the Department of Health (DOH) website for the registry. H.5918 looks to balance the public health needs with the protection of property owners' privacy rights by .
- **Financial Burden on Property Owners** - The rental registry law adds another annual requirement that makes it less likely small rental property owners will be able to continue renting their houses at prices that Rhode Islanders can afford. H.5918 allows property owners to not have to re-register if there are no changes to the information required from the prior year.

We believe it is important to recognize that many property owners across the state own and manage one or two rental properties. They are not large management companies or property owners. These property owners are looking to comply with the requirements of the registry along with various other requirements, including the fire code, while providing affordable places for Rhode Islanders.

House bill 5917 and House bill 5918 represent essential legislative steps in improving housing affordability and safeguarding public health. We support these efforts that recognize the practical challenges associated with rental registry laws implementation, particularly regarding inspection capacity, privacy concerns, and the financial impact on property owners.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on H.5917 and H.5918. We ask that you support their passage.

Sincerely,

Rhode Island Association of Realtors

Rhode Island Builders Association

Rhode Island Business Group on Health

Rhode Island Hospitality Association

Rhode Island Manufacturers Association

Rhode Island Marine Trade Association

Rhode Island Staffing Association

Small Business Economic Summit Regulations Committee

cc. House Judiciary Committee members