

Roberta DiMezza

From: JR Coffin <user@votervoice.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 11:46 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support H5917, H5918, & H 5906 Changes to Lead & Registry

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Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

I am eight and a half months pregnant. Of all people, I understand the importance of lead remediation. My husband and I have worked diligently over the past several years to remediate lead hazards inside both of our properties. It is unquestionably in our best interest to provide safe housing.

However, 2 months into my pregnancy the new lead laws were passed the lead on the exterior of our owner occupied property propelled us into significant uncertainty financial burden. The existing lead paint has been covered with regular paint, but it is now peeling, requiring a full residing that will cost upwards of \$40,000. This is not an expense we can afford all at once, especially as we prepare to welcome a child into our family. Due to our location we do not qualify for any federal or state support. And in just a few weeks, our household income will decrease as I take time to care for my newborn, yet we will also be expected to set aside substantial funds for exterior remediation.

At the same time, we rely on rental income to sustain our family and maintain safe housing for our tenants. All our tenants are long term and are not in an risk category of for lead exposure—ironically, I am the only person in our home who falls into an at-risk category. Yet, under current regulations, we face the threat of rent escrow, potential eviction proceedings, and additional fees while simply trying to navigate this process responsibly.

These new bills offer a more realistic path forward. They would allow housing providers like myself to allocate funds toward lead remediation in a way that is financially viable, rather than forcing immediate compliance under conditions that create instability for both landlords and tenants. Ensuring safe housing should not come at the cost of making housing unaffordable or putting families—both owners and renters—at risk of financial ruin.

I urge you to support these necessary reforms so that responsible property owners can make lead-safe housing a reality while keeping their homes, tenants, and financial futures secure.

It is important that we strike a balance with the new lead & rental registry law. The reality of the situation is that the all-encompassing approach has caused a massive burden on an already strained system. Rhode Island does not currently have the capacity to do what the new law calls for. The increase in demand without a labor supply, coupled with inflation, during an already troubling housing crisis, is a worrisome problem that is not going to go away anytime soon. The rental housing market is slated to incur millions of dollars in additional operational expenses as a direct result of this legislation. This undoubtedly will be passed on to tenants unless something is done now. We must focus our efforts where it counts - children under 6 - and leave the rest of our housing stock for a time that makes sense. Preserving affordability and housing availability in our state is imperative, including for our aging, fixed-income populations, that are not at-risk of possible lead exposure. Thank you for considering these carefully crafted pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

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