

Susan J Martins-Phipps
In SUPPORT of House Bill 5917

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill No. 5917, the proposed legislative changes to the mandatory rental registry. These modifications to the legislation passed in last year's session provide a much-needed balance between tenant protections, property owner rights, and practical regulatory enforcement.

The bill introduces **reasonable and necessary adjustments** to the rental registry by limiting mandatory registration to properties constructed prior to 1978. This is a **logical and evidence-based approach**, as federal and state laws already exempt post-1978 properties from lead disclosure requirements due to the ban on lead-based paint. Extending this same exemption to Rhode Island's rental registry will prevent unnecessary regulatory burdens while maintaining a strong focus on housing safety.

Additionally, **removing the prohibition on eviction for nonpayment of rent when a property is not registered** is a crucial reform. The current law creates unintended consequences that **jeopardize both property maintenance and tenant stability**. If landlords are unable to collect rent due to registration delays—often caused by a backlog of lead inspections—they may struggle to maintain their properties, leading to unsafe housing conditions or even foreclosure. This reform ensures that financial stability for landlords is not unfairly compromised by administrative delays while maintaining the ultimate goal of tenant safety.

The bill also makes **important updates to public-facing information for safety and privacy reasons**. In an era where personal security concerns have escalated dramatically, it is vital to protect landlords from potential harassment while still ensuring transparency. By restricting publicly displayed landlord personal contact information while maintaining access to property managers' contact details, the proposal strikes a **reasonable compromise between accessibility and privacy**.

Finally, the bill **extends the effective date of the registry requirement to September 1, 2025, and the penalty assessment date to October 1, 2025**. These extensions **allow landlords ample time to comply** with the new regulations while ensuring a fair transition.

This legislation **demonstrates a well-balanced approach** to housing policy, acknowledging both tenant protections and the practical challenges landlords face in maintaining safe and financially stable rental properties. I urge policymakers to support this bill and ensure that Rhode Island's rental laws are both effective and equitable.

Respectively submitted,

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