

Roberta DiMezza

From: Tyler Bernadyn <user@votervoice.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 11:45 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: OPPOSE 5921

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Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

This is also completely absurd and far too interpretive. Consider, thisSo you sign a lease yesterday? The tenant moves in today. In 2 weeks the tenant gives you essentially a blackmail list of repairs and improvements you need to make for them to pay the next month's rent. So you sign a lease yesterday? The tenant moves in today. In 2 weeks the tenant gives you essentially a blackmail list of repairs and improvements you need to make for them to pay the next month's rent. Then we all said and done. You ask for back pay. They say I don't have it. So you have to start the eviction process. The judge sides with a tenant and the tenant only has to pay one month's rent. Thankfully their lease is up. Wait. No it's not. You have to by law resign the contract with these people. But at least you get to raise their rent by 4%...

Let's start looking at things rationally. Let's start protecting our housing providers in this state.

Please oppose Rhode Island House Bill 5921, which allows tenants to withhold rent payments and place them into an escrow account if a housing code enforcement officer issues a second notice of violation. The money in the escrow maybe awarded by the court to the tenant as an abatement of rent. We oppose this bill because it could create financial instability, making it harder to cover essential expenses like mortgages, property taxes, and maintenance. Without steady rental income, landlords may struggle to address the very violations cited, potentially worsening housing conditions.

The bill also raises concerns about potential abuse, as some tenants could exploit this provision by exaggerating minor issues to justify withholding rent, leading to unnecessary disputes.

Existing laws already provide tenants with options to address unresolved code violations, such as reporting landlords to housing authorities or pursuing legal action. Adding another layer of regulation may be unnecessary and redundant. This bill could also discourage property investment, as the risk of rent withholding may make rental housing less attractive to current and prospective landlords, reducing the availability of affordable housing.

The lack of clear guidelines on inconsistent enforcement, make it difficult for landlords to determine when rent withholding is justified. While the bill is intended to hold landlords accountable for maintaining habitable housing, it could create unintended consequences that destabilize the rental market and make it harder for property owners to operate successfully. There are other questions as to who establishes this escrow account and who controls it?

Sincerely,

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