



Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® & State-Wide MLS

March 16, 2026

The Honorable Rep. Carol McEntee

House Judiciary Committee

82 Smith Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

## **Relating To Property---Residential Landlord and Tenant Act**

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR), we respectfully submit this testimony in support of H.7559. RIAR represents more than 5,900 licensed real estate professionals who work every day in the listing, sale, leasing, management, and appraisal of residential and commercial real estate and who are committed to stable housing markets to make Rhode Island a better place to call home.

While RIAR supports policies that promote stable housing and fair treatment for tenants, H.7559 raises significant concerns regarding property rights, housing supply, and the practical operation of Rhode Island's rental market.

The bill limits the mandatory rental registry to properties constructed prior to 1978. In that year, the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned the use of lead-based paint in residential properties. Since post-1978 buildings do not contain lead paint, both federal and state laws already exempt these properties from lead disclosure requirements to avoid confusion among buyers and renters. This proposal aligns the registry with existing law by removing post-1978 properties from unnecessary inclusion.

This provision, as currently written, creates several unintended consequences:

- **Financial Instability for Property Owners:**  
When tenants withhold rent, landlords may be unable to pay mortgages, maintain properties, or address safety issues—including lead remediation—ultimately putting tenants at greater risk.
- **Risk of Abuse:**  
Tenants may withhold rent regardless of the actual safety condition of the property. A property may be lead-safe but awaiting inspection, yet still subject to enforcement restrictions that disadvantage the landlord.
- **Low Likelihood of Rent Recovery:**  
Once rent is withheld, it is rarely recovered, compounding financial hardship and reducing resources available for property upkeep.

#### **Section 6(C):**

In response to increasing incidents of harassment and personal safety risks, the bill refines what information is made publicly available in the rental registry database.

#### **The Following Information Would No Longer Be Publicly Posted:**

- Landlord’s business, PO box, or home address
- Landlord’s email address
- Landlord’s telephone number

These changes aim to protect individuals from potential harassment or harm while still maintaining accountability.

#### **The Following Information Would Continue To Be Publicly Posted:**

The bill preserves access to critical information needed by tenants and the public, including:

- Name of the landlord or business entity responsible for leasing
- Property manager, management company, or agent for service

- Business address or PO box of the property manager or agent
- Active email address for the property manager or agent
- Active telephone number for the property manager or agent
- Information necessary to identify each dwelling unit

This ensures transparency and accessibility without compromising personal safety.

**Interagency Sharing Prohibited:**

- The bill prohibits the Department of Health from sharing registry data with other government entities. This measure ensures that information collected for public health purposes is not repurposed in ways that could discourage compliance or raise privacy concerns.

**Conclusion:**

Therefore, we continue to advocate for the safety of property owners and tenant. This bill restores a balance between the rights of both parties. We thank the sponsors in the House and Senate for championing this piece of legislation. The Association urges this amendment be passed out of committee.



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