Ariana Costa

Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

I often wonder whether the folks who try to pass these bills ever rented a property to a tenant. Have they ever had a bad tenant? Have they ever had to pay to fix a furnace on a Sunday or pay for snow removal after a storm? Did they have a plumbing issue on a rental that was exacerbated by the tenants not telling them? Do they pay higher real estate taxes on a non owner occupied property? Have they had to pay to evict a non paying tenant while the tenant lives rent free for 6 months while the landlord continues paying the mortgage, taxes, insurance, water and sewer only to find out the non paying tenant cases an additional $5000 worth of damage upon departure. Tie the hands of a landlords with rent control and tie their hands for fixing property issues and maintaining safe housing for the good tenants. Rent control doesn't work.. It's proven not to work.

Housing affordability is a serious and legitimate concern. However, this proposal adopts a rigid price-control framework that will undermine housing production, discourage reinvestment in existing properties, and ultimately restrict supply in a market that already faces long-standing structural constraints.

The ordinance would cap rent increases at 4% annually, restrict rent resets between tenancies through vacancy control, and impose substantial statutory penalties — including three months' rent in damages, attorneys' fees, and potential punitive damages — for violations. This combination of price caps, administrative oversight, and litigation exposure creates significant regulatory risk for housing providers of all sizes, and fuels displacement of residents by fueling massive disinvestment from the current diverse housing provider market that is unique to Rhode Island.

Providence has faced barriers to new housing production for decades. Only recently has the state taken meaningful steps to encourage additional units through zoning reform, ADUs, and more flexible use of existing structures. Not all new housing comes in the form of large-scale developments. Many units enter the market through two-family conversions, small additions, and incremental reinvestment in existing properties. Policies that disconnect rent levels from operating costs, inflation, property taxes, and insurance premiums will slow this momentum.

Vacancy control is especially concerning. By limiting the ability to reset rent between tenancies, the ordinance suppresses normal market turnover dynamics. In other jurisdictions, similar frameworks have led to reduced mobility, deferred maintenance, and withdrawal of units from the rental market. When revenue growth is constrained but expenses continue to rise — including municipal taxes and insurance — property viability erodes over time.

Moreover, enforcement will require public resources. Administrative oversight, exemption review, compliance monitoring, and inevitable litigation will impose ongoing costs. Those resources could instead be deployed toward targeted rental assistance, production incentives, and strategies that directly expand housing supply and support the most vulnerable residents.

Rhode Island deserves solutions that increase housing choice and availability at all levels. Expanding supply (for renters and buyers), streamlining permitting, encouraging adaptive reuse, and directing responsible, targeted assistance to households in need are approaches that strengthen the housing ecosystem without creating the unintended consequences consistently associated with rent control.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Council to vote no on this ordinance and instead pursue policies that produce measurable, durable improvements in housing affordability.

Sincerely,

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