

Ariana Costa

From: bounce@bounce.votervoice.net on behalf of Anthony Thompson
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Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 10:13 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: OPPOSE - Please vote NO H8108

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Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

I respectfully submit testimony in opposition to bill H8108.

This legislation should be viewed as a statewide economic policy rather than a landlord-tenant dispute. Regulating housing prices changes incentives across the entire market — affecting investment decisions, property maintenance, financing, and ultimately the availability of housing for Rhode Island residents.

Evidence from other jurisdictions consistently shows that rent control reduces housing supply and reinvestment. A national survey by the National Apartment Association found that 71% of housing providers expect to reduce or halt investment in regulated markets, while more than 60% report deferring non-essential maintenance and improvements. The National Association of Home Builders similarly reports that nearly 90% of builders avoid constructing housing in rent-controlled jurisdictions.

This is particularly concerning in Rhode Island, where over 80% of the housing stock is older and depends on continual reinvestment to remain safe and habitable. Limiting rental income makes it more difficult to finance repairs, modernization, and energy improvements, which ultimately harms the quality of housing available to tenants.

Historical outcomes reinforce this pattern. In the 1980s, after rent control was imposed, the number of rental units declined by 8% in Cambridge and 12% in Brookline, Massachusetts. After Cambridge repealed rent control in 1994, permits for new construction and renovation more than doubled for the following decade — demonstrating how regulation had suppressed housing activity.

Rent regulation also affects public finances. Reduced property values translate into reduced tax revenue for essential services. Because municipalities rely heavily on property taxation, that burden does not disappear — it shifts, often onto single-family homeowners. In Portland, Maine, analysts estimated \$6.3 to \$10.6 million annually in redistributed tax burden onto other property owners following similar policies. Many of Rhode Island's cities have a larger share of multifamily property in comparison to Portland, ME - meaning that shift would be even larger.

Finally, rent control often fails to reach those most in need. After repeal in Cambridge, a study of over 12,000 units showed only 10% of rent-controlled units were occupied by low-income households, illustrating how broad price controls can mis-allocate benefits while making housing harder to find for future renters.

Rhode Island faces a real affordability challenge, but long-term solutions require expanding housing availability and supporting targeted assistance for households in need — not discouraging housing creation and reinvestment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anthony Thompson
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