

Roberta DiMezza

From: bounce@bounce.votervoice.net on behalf of Michael Medeiros <user@votervoice.net>
Sent: Saturday, March 14, 2026 12:22 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: OPPOSE RENT CONTROL H8108 & S2271

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Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully write in opposition to Senate Bill S2271 and House Bill H8108.

Rhode Island's housing affordability challenges are serious and deserve thoughtful solutions. However, statewide rent control is unlikely to address the underlying structural shortage and may unintentionally worsen long-term affordability.

A broad body of economic research shows that rent regulation reduces housing supply and discourages reinvestment. A 2019 Stanford study examining San Francisco's rent control expansion found that while some incumbent tenants benefited in the short term, rental housing supply declined as units were converted or withdrawn from the market, contributing to higher rents citywide over time. Reviews from institutions such as the National Bureau of Economic Research consistently reach similar conclusions: rent caps tend to reduce new construction and slow rehabilitation activity.

The issue is incentive alignment. Housing production and reinvestment depend on predictable returns. When revenue growth is capped while operating costs continue to rise, investment slows and supply contracts.

Importantly, even policymakers supportive of tenant protections have recognized the risks of sweeping statewide mandates. In Massachusetts, Governor Maura Healey has opposed broad statewide rent control frameworks. Boston Mayor Michelle Wu has also opposed a uniform state mandate, arguing that cities and towns should retain control because housing markets differ significantly across municipalities. Providence Mayor Brett Smiley similarly opposed restrictive rent control provisions locally, emphasizing that increasing supply is central to improving affordability.

Rhode Island's municipalities vary widely in housing stock, vacancy rates, income levels, and development patterns. A one-size-fits-all statewide framework does not account for these differences and removes flexibility from local governments best positioned to evaluate their own markets.

Additionally, landlord operating costs are rising rapidly. Property taxes, insurance premiums, compliance expenses, and repair costs have increased sharply in recent years — in many cases far outpacing general inflation. Insurance markets in particular have seen substantial premium escalation. When costs rise at this pace while rental revenue growth is restricted, property maintenance and capital improvements become more difficult to sustain. Over time, this reduces housing quality and availability.

There is also a municipal finance consideration. Rhode Island cities and towns rely heavily on stable property values to fund schools, infrastructure, and public safety. If regulated income constrains valuations while municipal obligations remain fixed, tax burdens shift toward more stable classes of property — often single-family homeowners.

States that continue layering regulatory cost and complexity onto housing production tend to experience the highest long-term housing cost burdens. Sustainable affordability depends on expanding supply, encouraging reinvestment, and targeting assistance directly to vulnerable households — not imposing broad price controls.

Rhode Island's housing challenge is fundamentally one of constrained supply. Policies that risk discouraging new construction or reinvestment may unintentionally deepen that shortage.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose S2271 and H8108 and instead focus on policies that expand housing opportunity while preserving local flexibility and encouraging reinvestment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I am writing to express opposition to Senate Bill S2271 and House Bill 8108.

This legislation should be understood as a policy detrimental to the state economy, not a landlord-tenant disagreement. Policies that regulate housing prices alter incentives across the entire housing market — influencing investment, maintenance, lending, insurance underwriting, and ultimately whether additional housing is created in Rhode Island. Analysis from the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC) consistently emphasizes two realities about our state's housing and municipal finance structure: Rhode Island faces a structural housing shortage, and municipalities rely heavily on stable property values to fund core public services. Policies that discourage reinvestment or reduce property values directly undermine both of these conditions at the same time.

By limiting the financial viability of rental housing, this proposal risks reducing reinvestment in existing units and slowing new development. RIPEC's research has highlighted that increasing supply is essential to improving affordability. Measures that restrict returns on housing do the opposite — they discourage production and delay rehabilitation, worsening long-term affordability rather than improving it.

The bill would also require an extensive regulatory framework to administer compliance, hearings, and enforcement. This type of permanent oversight structure carries substantial cost while producing no new housing units. Rhode Island's limited public resources would be more effectively directed toward targeted assistance programs and policies that expand supply — approaches that research repeatedly shows are more effective at helping households facing affordability challenges.

Additionally, if regulated property values stagnate while municipal obligations remain constant, tax burdens inevitably shift. Because municipalities must still fund schools, infrastructure, and safety services, pressure moves toward the most stable tax base: single-family homeowners.

Rhode Island's housing challenge is real, but long-term affordability depends on increasing availability and encouraging reinvestment — not discouraging it. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose S2271/H8108 and instead focus on policies that expand housing opportunity and directly assist residents in need.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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