

## Ariana Costa

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**From:** bounce@bounce.votervoice.net on behalf of Michael Medeiros <user@votervoice.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 18, 2026 10:06 AM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Subject:** OPPOSE RENT CONTROL/JUST CAUSE H8109/S2294

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee, I respectfully urge you to oppose H8109/S2294 This bill is not a minor tenant protection adjustment. It is a radical restructuring of Rhode Island lease law that will increase friction, increase cost, reduce housing supply, make RI less competitive and erode fundamental property rights.

1. It converts fixed-term leases into effectively indefinite tenancies.

Section 34-18-38.3(a) prohibits removal “by failure to renew any lease, or otherwise,” unless statutory “good cause” is proven in court. This eliminates the ordinary ability not to renew a lease at term expiration and effectively converts fixed-term agreements into perpetual tenancies.

The ability to determine whether to renew a lease is a core component of property ownership. Removing that right materially increases risk. When risk rises, supply contracts.

2. The “permanently stay” language undermines enforceability.

Section 34-18-38.3(b)(3) allows a tenant to permanently stay the issuance or execution of an eviction warrant in nonpayment proceedings, so long as procedural requirements are met.

This language is extraordinary. It creates a scenario in which a landlord may prevail in court yet be unable to regain possession in a predictable timeframe. Housing providers depend on enforceable contracts. When enforceability weakens, providers tighten screening standards, increase upfront requirements, or exit the market. Those consequences disproportionately affect renters with fewer options.

3. The bill imposes a de facto statewide rent cap — and statewide mandates ignore local realities.

The rebuttable presumption that rent increases above 4% (or 1.5× CPI) are unreasonable operates as a statewide rent ceiling in practice.

Operating costs do not rise at 4%. Property taxes, insurance premiums, utilities, labor, materials, and compliance costs have increased sharply in recent years—many well above 4%. Insurance costs in particular have escalated dramatically.

When revenue growth is capped while expenses rise faster, reinvestment declines and housing quality deteriorates.

Even leaders supportive of tenant protections have recognized the risks of sweeping statewide rent mandates.

Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey has opposed broad statewide rent control frameworks. Boston Mayor Michelle Wu has argued that housing policy should allow cities and towns flexibility rather than imposing uniform state mandates, recognizing that housing markets differ significantly by municipality. Providence Mayor Brett Smiley similarly opposed restrictive rent control provisions locally, emphasizing that increasing supply—not constraining it—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 mandate ignores those differences and removes local flexibility.

4. Increased regulation increases friction and reduces supply.

This bill adds litigation risk, compliance burden, and operational uncertainty statewide without creating a single new housing unit. Housing supply responds to incentives. States that layer regulation and cost onto housing markets consistently experience higher long-term housing cost burdens.

Rhode Island faces a structural housing shortage. Policies that increase risk and reduce predictability will discourage new development and reinvestment at precisely the wrong time.

This is a radical shift in lease law. Stability for renters is an important goal, but stability that reduces supply ultimately worsens affordability for everyone.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to reject LC005792.

Sincerely,  
Michael Medeiros

I am against just cause eviction laws and rent control measures. This bill not only removes a property owner's ability to serve a non-renewal notice to a resident at lease term's end, effectively granting residents a perpetual lease, but also imposes rent control with a maximum annual increase of 4%. Rent control policies are widely agreed upon by over 90% of economists to not work for overall affordability.

Although I acknowledge worries about the unjust removal of long-standing residents, I am convinced that this strategy is not the correct course of action and will adversely affect both property owners and residents. Advocates of just cause eviction argue that it shields long-time residents from unethical landlords. However, these constraints significantly curtail property owners' capacity to promptly tackle resident issues and expel disruptive or potentially harmful individuals. Such measures unsettle rental communities, clash with state laws addressing problematic properties, and deter investment in rental housing.

Under just cause eviction, housing providers can only evict residents for reasons explicitly listed in the law. While these protections seem reasonable, they hinder property owners from efficiently managing their properties. The bill mandates landlords to "show cause" and obtain a court order to terminate a lease, particularly challenging in cases involving criminal activities. This policy shifts the responsibility of providing proof and evidence of such activity to neighboring tenants. Most often, neighboring tenants have concerns with retaliation from problem tenants and may be uprooted from their own home out of fear. This scenario can be avoided when a landlord is free to exercise their rights and swiftly act.

Additional eviction and turnover is very costly. Property owners do not want to overzealously evict. The intention of a property owner is to generally attract stable, long-term, tenants, which means less loss due to vacancy and turnover costs which are in the thousands. It is untruthful to portray landlords as people who intend to remove people from their homes at any chance.

I am afraid that policies such as the one set forth in H809 and S2294 could have the potential to counteract many of the positive housing policies that have been set forth in Speaker Shekarchi's housing packages. As a state we must move in the direction of finding ways to work together and solving problems, rather than shifting blame and punishment amongst different parties. Please consider the detrimental impacts of this bill as well as any and all just cause and rent control bills would have. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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