



March 16, 2026
The Honorable Rep. Carol McEntee
House Judiciary Committee
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: AN ACT RELATING TO JUST CAUSE EVICTIONS

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR), we respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to H8109. 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.8109 raises significant concerns regarding property rights, housing supply, and the practical operation of Rhode Island's rental market.

Statewide “Just Cause” Requirement Limits Property Owner Flexibility

H8109 would prohibit a landlord from removing a tenant or declining to renew a tenancy unless the landlord can establish a specific statutory “just cause.”

Key concerns include:

- Property owners would lose the ability to end a tenancy at the expiration of a lease without demonstrating a statutory justification
- Effectively converts many rental agreements into indefinite tenancies
- Landlords may need to regain possession of a unit for legitimate business or personal reasons that are not clearly covered
- Limiting flexibility may discourage individuals from offering rental housing in the first place

Rent Increase Provision Creates De Facto Rent Control

H8109 creates a presumption that rent increases exceeding 4% or 1.5 times the Consumer Price Index are unreasonable.

This structure raises several concerns:

- It effectively establishes statewide rent regulation without the broader policy framework
- Operating costs, including insurance, property taxes, maintenance, and utilities, may increase at rates higher than the allowed threshold
- Property owners may face legal disputes over whether a rent increase is considered “reasonable”
- Limiting rent adjustments may reduce the financial viability of maintaining and improving rental properties

Potential Increase in Litigation and Administrative Burden

H8109 creates a new legal framework governing eviction and non-renewal decisions that may increase disputes between landlords and tenants.

Possible impacts include:

- Courts may be required to evaluate whether rent increases are “unreasonable.”
- Landlords may face additional documentation requirements to demonstrate compliance
- Lease violations, nuisance claims, or access issues disputes could become more complex to litigate
- Small property owners who lack legal resources may be disproportionately affected

Small Housing Providers May Be Disproportionately Impacted

Although H8109 contains exemptions for certain owner-occupied properties and small landlords, many housing providers would still fall within its scope.

Important considerations include:

- Many rental properties are owned by individuals or families rather than large corporations
- Owners often rely on rental income to cover mortgages, taxes, and maintenance costs
- Increased regulatory complexity may discourage continued participation in the rental market
- Reduced participation by small property owners could further limit available housing supply

Impact on Rhode Island’s Housing Supply

Policies that substantially increase regulatory requirements on rental housing may unintentionally affect the availability of units in the already constrained market.

Potential impacts include:

- Reluctance among small landlords to rent out units due to increased legal and regulatory complexity
- Reduced investment in the acquisition, rehabilitation, or maintenance of rental properties
- Increased conversion of smaller rental properties to owner-occupied housing or other uses
- Additional pressure on already limited rental housing supply, particularly in smaller multi-family properties

Reforms should consider how new regulatory frameworks may affect the willingness of property owners to continue providing rental housing.

Conclusion

H8109 establishes a complex regulatory structure that could significantly alter Rhode Island’s rental market and discourage the continued participation of housing providers. Policies addressing housing stability should carefully balance tenant protections with the need to maintain a healthy and functioning housing market.

For these reasons, the Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® respectfully urges the Committee to oppose H8109.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trevor J. Chasse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Trevor J. Chasse
Director, Government Affairs
Rhode Island Association of REALTORS®