



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

May 19, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair McEntee and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I support House Bill 7199, *An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act – Rhode Island Survivor Early Lease Termination Act*. If enacted, this would grant tenants who are the survivors of abuse the right to terminate a lease agreement early without penalty or liability for rent. The legislation would also establish a process for requests to change locks.

For many survivors, housing instability is one of the greatest barriers to escaping abuse. Under current law, those living in abusive situations may face eviction, debt, or homelessness if they leave their home urgently due to increasing violence or threats to their children. This legislation would align Rhode Island law with protections included in the Violence Against Women Act, which currently applies to federally assisted housing.

No person should have to choose between their safety and the risk of eviction or homelessness. House Bill 7199 creates a fair and confidential process for helping survivors leave dangerous situations and would put Rhode Island in line with 41 other states that already have these protections in place, including all other New England states.

I thank the sponsor of this important piece of legislation and ask the Committee to vote in favor of House Bill 7199.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brett P. Smiley".

Brett P. Smiley
Mayor