

18 March 2024

To the Honorable Members of the Rhode Island House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing,

My name is Tyra Shepherd and I am writing to you **in support of H 7987**, an Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Housing Maintenance and Occupancy – Notice of Violations, which would require a housing code enforcement officer to give a copy of any housing code violation to all tenants of the building affected by a housing code violation along with any hearing dates scheduled for the violation.

This bill amends the existing process of notification to require tenants be informed of the violations taking place in their dwelling. This is a crucial, simple, and free step in the direction of empowering tenants. The current process relies on the owner to inform tenants of violations of housing code, which is not only informal but, in many cases, may be unsafe. Housing code violations may include a lack of proper lead certification, unsafe structures, improper ventilation, electricity issues, and more. The fact that tenants have no current legal right to be aware of these housing code violations in their own homes is dangerous, reprehensible, and entirely antithetical to what the state of Rhode Island should stand for.

This bill is a straightforward, uncontroversial, and essential effort to reduce unfair renting practices and uplift tenants by bringing transparency to the violations of housing codes. Everyone deserves to be informed of potentially dangerous and unsafe housing code violations taking place in their own home, and it shouldn't be up to landlords — who may not want to inform tenants of violations — to do so; people deserve legal protection.

I call on the Rhode Island House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing to stand with renters and support this bill, a step in the right direction towards empowering tenants. It is the least we can do to improve the housing quality of Rhode Island tenants and promote a better quality of life.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Tyra Shepherd