

Dear Committee clerk Huntley,

Dear Rep. Messier and members of the House Municipal Government & Housing Committee,

I OPPOSE H7891.

This bill proposes several things, each of which will further exacerbate the shortage of housing in Rhode Island, and will increase costs of housing for all residents. This especially creates a hardship for folks who live in Providence - many of which are homeowners who rent a unit or two in their own homes.

I think this bill would be a disaster for working families and immigrants who rely on this rental money to be homeowners in the first place, and it'll also be a disaster for housing providers and renters who discover the housing shortages and increased costs of rentals that will result from this bill.

Rent control is widely known to be a disaster for housing. There are few winners when a city or state implements rent control, and many losers. Rent control is a regressive policy, and you should not consider it. I know that some people believe that it helps renters, and it does help a few of them, but in aggregate, it results in fewer rental units being available, which results in renters not being able to find housing, and not being able to change their housing situation. Developers are not able to build new (since banks will not lend on rent controlled projects). Landlords will not maintain properties, since there is no incentive to do so.

Oddly enough, this means that there are fewer jobs for tenants - when you destroy the construction industry, you limit the ability for all industries to hire and pay decent wages.

Just cause evictions are also a horrible idea. Landlords will not be able to offer apartments to as many tenants, since renting to a tenant could end up being a lifetime commitment. Although a tenant might start out well in a unit, they may have issues later that create a situation that means they should leave the apartment, such as a new-found drug addiction that results in the tenant creating an unsafe living environment for other tenants in the building.

Regulation of condo and cooperative conversions - this is simply unamerican. Please do not require additional restrictions on residential property. It's shocking that a home owner would have to bribe a tenant to leave even if the homeowner wants to move into their own home. This is simply shocking and ridiculous and I can't imagine it would have a good result.

I see that you'd make it such that a building permit couldn't be issued if there's a violation. This is the most out of touch concept - HOW can an owner fix a violation without a building permit?! A building permit is PERMISSION to fix something. You create a situation where owners are not allowed to repair or fix violations and fine them when they don't repair or fix.

A citywide rental registry

Sounds like an unfunded mandate that will further burden providence, and to what end? I'm not sure, but it sounds like unnecessary use of tax dollars. I would expect that this would create additional burden on the Providence inspectional team, will result in more violations, and end up displacing tenants as landlords deal with violations, and result in higher rents.

Then, you want to allow tenants to escrow rental payments - this could happen even for a minor violation. Again, how does an owner deal with repairs in these situations?

When you increase uncertainty for housing providers, you reduce the availability of housing, and increase the costs.

I think your intent with this bill is admirable, but please work to increase the availability of housing and reduce costs to housing providers if you want to solve this crisis. Housing providers have decades of experience in providing housing and are a wealth of ideas, you should reach out and learn what it actually takes to get this problem solved.

Sincerely,

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