

House Bill H 7989, the Tenant Protection Act, proposes significant changes to landlord-tenant relationships and housing regulations in Rhode Island. While the intentions behind the bill may be well-meaning, we believe that it presents several critical flaws and would have detrimental effects on both landlords and tenants. Here are the reasons why we strongly oppose this proposed legislation:

1. **\*\*Infringement on Property Rights\*\***: The Tenant Protection Act grants municipalities broad authority to implement rent control measures, limit annual rent increases, and regulate evictions. However, these provisions infringe upon the property rights of landlords by dictating how they can manage their rental properties and potentially diminishing their ability to generate fair returns on their investments. Property owners should have the autonomy to set rents based on market conditions and property maintenance costs without undue government interference.
2. **\*\*Market Distortion and Housing Shortages\*\***: Rent control and stringent eviction regulations have been shown to distort housing markets and exacerbate housing shortages in other jurisdictions. By artificially limiting rent increases and restricting landlords' ability to evict tenants, the bill could discourage investment in rental properties, reduce the supply of rental units, and ultimately worsen housing affordability for both current and future tenants. This could particularly impact low-income individuals and families who rely on affordable rental housing options.
3. **\*\*Unintended Consequences for Property Maintenance\*\***: Rent control measures may disincentivize landlords from making necessary repairs and improvements to rental properties. With limited ability to increase rents to cover maintenance costs, landlords may cut back on property maintenance, leading to deteriorating housing conditions and reduced quality of life for tenants. Additionally, stringent eviction regulations may make it challenging for landlords to address lease violations and remove problem tenants, further exacerbating maintenance issues and tenant dissatisfaction.
4. **\*\*Burden on Small Landlords and Property Owners\*\***: The Tenant Protection Act imposes significant administrative burdens and compliance costs on small landlords and property owners. Complying with rent control regulations, navigating eviction procedures, and documenting just cause reasons for eviction could be especially burdensome for individual landlords or owners of small rental properties. This could deter individuals from entering the rental market or force existing landlords to sell their properties, further reducing rental housing supply.
5. **\*\*Failure to Address Root Causes of Housing Affordability\*\***: While the bill aims to address homelessness, displacement, and housing affordability issues, its focus on rent control and eviction

regulations overlooks the root causes of these problems. Instead of implementing policies that may distort housing markets and undermine property rights, policymakers should focus on initiatives to increase affordable housing supply, promote economic development, and provide targeted assistance to low-income households.

In conclusion, House Bill H 7989, the Tenant Protection Act, poses significant risks to both landlords and tenants and fails to address the underlying challenges in Rhode Island's housing market. Rather than pursuing measures that could have unintended consequences and distort housing markets, policymakers should seek alternative solutions that promote housing affordability, encourage investment in rental housing, and protect the rights of property owners and tenants alike.

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