

Dear Committee clerk Huntley,

As an owner-occupant landlord and mom-and-pop landlord with 6 apartment units total being rented in East Side of Providence, my wife and I oppose just cause eviction and rent controls. Me and my wife understand the burden inflation causes, because we are ordinary people just like our tenants. We may own the three-unit home, but we live in one of the apartments just like them, shop for our groceries just like them, and go work every day just like them. The only difference is we're responsible for all the property expenses. Both existing tenants I live with have below market rents, in large part because they are good neighbors, and we want to incentivize them to stay. These bills however would make it so that I would not be able to pass along the increased cost to provide housing if they were to surge higher again. Furthermore, if they ever chose to move out, I would have to offer below market rent for every tenant thereafter. If rent control caps my rent increases to 4% but I'm already starting from well below market rents, I'll never keep up with expenses and never be able to sell to get out. The proposal of bills like these makes me think that I was a fool to have ever done a nice thing for someone and give my neighbors a good deal. The question I ask myself, is after bills like these are proposed (they don't even need to pass to do damage), will there even be any owner-occupied landlord who wants to do this anymore? As an owner-occupant landlord, it is frankly shocking that these bills would set a precedent that my tenants should have better property rights than me as the owner. "Just cause" and eviction protections are misnomers.

It is easy to prove that "just cause eviction bills" are not about eviction at all but instead give tenants' ownership rights to the property without the responsibility that comes with ownership of a property. They are an illegal taking of property by the government but still saddle the landlord with all the responsibilities to provide housing. This is not extreme argument but one born by common sense, contract law, and an understanding of what is an asset and what has value. In any business or contract related matter, it is extraordinarily rare to see one party in the agreement given the contractual rights to unilaterally extend a contract in perpetuity, forever, at no additional cost. With "just cause" eviction, if a relative or friend moved in, even if they are not on the lease, this "right" would be transferable because most tenant "protection" bills extend coverage to people who are not even on the lease. This essentially allows for the rental to be transferred like real property. This gives property rights akin to ownership to the tenant. Except for the tenant it is an even better deal, because rent controls guarantees that their costs won't go up more than whatever the government dictates (usually 4% is proposed). Giving someone a unilateral right to extend a contract, at a predetermined fixed rate of cost increase, that they can transfer to another individual, is giving them an asset. It is given tenants this asset without the other party's (the property owner's) consent and at the cost of the property owner. Thus, this can be viewed as nothing less than a real estate property taking. In laymen's terms it looks like a taking, smells like a taking, tastes like a taking. It is a taking.

To further illustrate this point with an analogy. A contractual right to exercise an option is what a concert ticket is. You buy the ticket; it gives you the right to exercise an option to attend the concert but does not require you to attend. If you buy a ticket, you have a contractual option to exercise a certain action. "Just cause" eviction is like that; it gives the option holder a right to exercise a contractual action (to unilaterally extend a lease) except the tenant never paid for it and the landlord never consented to it. It comes at the sole expense of the landlord and can't be negotiated by the landlord. So called "Just cause" bills also include rent control. Which is another contractual option to cap cost increases regardless of the economic conditions and costs to provide housing. This is a more valuable right than owning the property, as any homeowner can tell you costs to keep and maintain their home have surged past 4% with tax increases, property insurance, and labor cost skyrocketing due to inflation. If inflation adjustments are allowed, they are usually based on a decision by a government department or based on baskets of consumer products (such as CPI and CPE used by the U.S. Federal Reserve) that are

not related or correlated to real estate. Usually, the inflation adjustment is designed to never adequately cover the actual costs to management and operating a building.

If I take your concert ticket against your will, I am a thief because that ticket is considered your property. It is your asset. If a government creates a law to do it, it should not be viewed morally different, it is still a taking. Notice how the "just cause" eviction bans legislation concerns not evictions, but the expiration and modification of contracts. "Just cause" is nothing more than a brilliant piece of marketing, to polish up a set of policies that would be soundly rejected if people called it what it is, a government property taking.

I urge you to oppose H 5954. This bill introduces rent control, just cause evictions, and a board with no safeguards against bias or inexperience. It also adds heavy regulations and costs for housing providers and developers. While it aims to help housing affordability and tenant protection, I believe it will harm landlords, tenants, and our community. Rent control can decrease housing investment, worsen rental properties, and limit affordable housing. Just cause evictions make it hard for landlords to manage properties and address issues. These policies would add unnecessary burden and bureaucracy to our tight housing market. Studies show they don't work as intended and may even benefit higher-income individuals more. Let's support housing development and reject harmful policies like these!

Sincerely,

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