

Dear Committee clerk Huntley,

I am writing to oppose H8363 licensing of student housing.

While I understand the intent behind this bill—to address concerns related to student housing—this legislation creates a new layer of regulation that will ultimately reduce available housing, increase costs, and create unnecessary administrative burdens without addressing the root causes of the issue.

First, this bill allows municipalities to impose licensing requirements on properties rented to students. In practice, this creates a separate and more restrictive regulatory category based solely on who occupies the unit. Housing should be regulated based on the identity or status of tenants.

For example, Providence has proposed an annual fee of \$500, BCI check, social security number, etc to obtain a license to rent to students. Including graduate students. Renting without a license will incur a penalty of \$500 per day. Licenses may be revoked by the city for noncompliance.

Second, adding licensing requirements, inspections, and potential fees will increase the cost of providing housing. These costs do not disappear—they are passed on through higher rents or result in fewer available units. At a time when Rhode Island is already facing a housing shortage, we should be removing barriers to housing, not creating new ones.

Third, this bill risks reducing housing supply in areas with high student populations. Many small property owners will choose not to rent to students if doing so subjects them to additional regulation, compliance requirements, or the risk of losing a license. This will push students into an already tight rental market, increasing competition and driving up rents for everyone.

Fourth, the bill gives broad authority to municipalities to design and enforce these licensing programs, which could lead to inconsistent rules across different cities and towns. This patchwork approach creates uncertainty for housing providers and discourages investment in rental housing.

Finally, Rhode Island already has laws in place to address nuisance behavior, property maintenance, and safety violations. If there are concerns about enforcement, the solution is to strengthen enforcement of existing laws—not to create a new regulatory framework that targets a specific group of tenants. The schools these students attend have many more tools at their disposal to address student behavior than their landlords.

We all want safe, well-managed housing and vibrant neighborhoods. However, this bill moves us in the wrong direction by adding complexity and cost to an already strained housing system.

I respectfully urge you to oppose this bill and instead focus on policies that increase housing supply, improve enforcement of existing laws, and support both tenants and housing providers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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