

February 5, 2018

To: The Honorable Brian Smith

RE: 18-0849 Housing; Rental Housing Safety drafted by David Hill

Dear Representative Smith,

My name is Patricia Sanders, I am a retired high school teacher and owner of three older rental buildings in North Troy, VT. While I do not reside in your district, I am very concerned about your committee's consideration of proposal 18-0849 which relates to safety of rental housing in Vermont. I ask that you vote against this legislation for the following reasons:

1. Justification for the proposal appears to be based primarily on a one sided, advocacy report compiled by the VLA, titled "Renters at Risk: The Cost of Substandard Housing". Instead of relying on factual, authentic research to validate their claims, VLA uses interviews of only 10 tenants who have had problems with their rental situations. This small sampling represents only a tiny portion of the estimated 80,000 - 85,000 tenants in Vermont. The report infers that the problems these 10 tenants face, permeates a large portion of rental housing in Vermont. I do not agree with that assumption. No Landlords or Landlord advocates were interviewed for this report. Had they been, VLA would have heard stories, all of which I have experienced, of Landlords being prevented from conducting essential repairs to their buildings because tenants have changed the locks and refuse to allow Landlords entrance to the apartments or tenants who are diehard hoarders, whose habit creates dangerous living conditions for themselves and others. They would also have heard of tenants who file undocumented, unfounded safety complaints to avoid paying rent or tenants who intentionally create safety issues for the same reason. To enact punitive legislation such as 18-0849, based on biased reporting would not resolve the issues our State faces with regards to rental housing

2. As owners of three older buildings, my husband and I have invested a great deal of time and money in renovations to comply with Vermont Health and Safety standards thereby providing safe, comfortable and affordable housing in a very low-income area of the state. Unfortunately, we have consistently had to deal with tenants who do not value the living space, nor do they live up to their responsibilities as tenants. We have learned that it is a very long, expensive, frustrating process to evict such tenants and regain possession of our property; often resulting in the loss of 2-6 months rent, high legal fees, costly repairs to the property due to damage done by the evicted tenants and virtually no way to recoup our losses. Additional, burdensome, biased legislation such as this will push already stressed, frustrated, honest landlords such as ourselves into

removing their properties from the rental market or charging higher rents; thereby increasing the lack of available, affordable, safe rental housing in an economically depressed area of Vermont.

3. Legislation already exists that establishes health and safety standards for rental housing in VT along with a process for overseeing complaints and resolutions to issues. The cost of implementing the programs outlined in this proposal will add additional unnecessary financial obligations to Landlords as well as an increased tax burden on municipalities and taxpayers. This type of legislation will discourage property owners, who may have available units, from entering the rental business. It will also force small business owners, such as ourselves, to abandon the rental business altogether or increase rents to pay for the increased cost of doing business in VT; once again exacerbating the problem of affordable, available rental housing

4. This proposal, along with the VLA Report, places the ownership of any problems associated with the rental units solely on the backs of the Landlords while placing no responsibility or accountability on the Tenants for problems that are directly caused by their tenancy. Such biased legislation such as this proposal, once again adds to the high cost of owning rental buildings in Vermont and could potentially cost Landlords a significant amount of money in legal fees to defend themselves against bogus claims filed by tenants to avoid paying rent. Landlords will have to charge higher rents to recoup their losses; a situation which is counter-productive to resolving the affordable housing issue.

I respectfully request you to abandon proposal 18-0849 Housing; rental housing safety drafted by David Hill

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Patricia Sanders
1739 Cross Road
Jay, Vermont 05850
802-988-4193