

Testimony: Income is not the only consideration associated with the eviction moratorium.

My name is Dorigen Keeney and I want to thank you for this opportunity to share my story. On the whole, I support the eviction moratorium and want to keep people in homes during this pandemic. I want to also share with you that this law has had consequences beyond money and not everyone needs your protection.

I own a house with my mother in Plainfield where she lives. Half of my mother's house is a separate 3 bedroom apartment. My mother is 88 years old and has severe dementia and congestive heart failure. She needs care 24 hours a day. I rented the apartment to the current tenant in June 2019 with the understanding that she would help care for my mother and her animals in lieu of some of her rent. The first night she was the only caregiver for my mother, she got drunk and passed out, leaving my mother alone. I did not ask her to care for my mother again. Within the next few months, she got 2 DUI's, confirming her problems with alcohol. Since then, she has destroyed property, broken the terms of the lease by moving unknown people into the apartment and paid her rent months late. In February 2020, I sent her a letter of eviction, asking her to leave by April 1, 2020.

Then came the pandemic and the eviction moratorium. She has not paid any rent since (which includes her heat, electricity and other services). As of this moment, she owes over \$18,000.

Her income is from work she does on-line and from home. She has indicated in emails that she has the money but will not pay because she is protected by the state.

I need to get this tenant out of the apartment so that I can move into the apartment and help care for my mother.

I applied for the Rent Stabilization money in November 2020 for 6 months back rent – understanding that I could not evict her for 6 months. What I did not know and was not clear in the application, was that the 6-month period when I could not evict her started when I received the money in December. In my mind, 6 month's rent caught her up until September at which time the 6 months non-eviction would start. Now, I cannot begin to evict her until June even if the moratorium is lifted. It was bad enough to think I was agreeing to having this person live rent free for a year in exchange for 6 months' rent. It was something (and I am grateful for that) but it is extending a bad situation even further.

Vermont's eviction moratorium is protecting some tenants who are taking advantage and costing landlords more than just the rent that is owed. My mother's care is tenuous and her health and behavior are declining. Because of the higher costs without a resident caregiver and the lack of rent, my mother is closer to having to go to a nursing home because keeping her at home is too expensive.

I ask the legislature to create a system whereby certain tenant situations can be heard by a judge and, if merited, exceptions made to the eviction moratorium.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our situation.

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