

**Elkington-Howard  
251 Herrick Road  
Benson, Vermont 05743**

March 21, 2023

House General and Housing Committee  
Vermont State House  
115 Main Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633

I am writing today in support of the passage of H.184. Since 2005 my wife, Nancy Elkington, and I have been landlords at two small apartment buildings; one in Burlington and one in Winooski. When we purchased our first apartment building in Burlington it was to provide me with a place to live during the week while I worked at my job running a busy restaurant, American Flatbread Burlington Hearth, in Burlington. We could not afford for me to rent an apartment in Burlington as well as pay for our mortgage in Benson and the hour and a half commute each way was not sustainable. We took a risk and purchased a true "slum lord special" in the Old North End. Over the next two years, out of financial necessity, we took on the majority of the renovation ourselves transforming a filthy run-down building into four lovely well maintained and affordable apartments.

We had three goals. First, I needed a clean safe place to live. Second, we wanted to provide a clean safe space for our tenants to live. Third, we wanted to rent to responsible tenants at a reasonable rent. Even in 2005 rental properties in Burlington were renting for amounts far above what the average hourly wage in town would support. I saw this every day in my work. Our employees were living 4 and 5 to an apartment or in apartments that were run down with poor heat or other issues. From the time we first began renting our renovated apartments we have charged below market rates for rent. We have never had the desire to rent for the most money that we could make, but instead, we wanted to rent for a reasonable amount in exchange for tenants who would take care of their apartments and be respectful of their neighbors. This has remained our goal.

In 2021 the City of Burlington completed the Citywide Revaluation. Our small, two studio and two one bedroom, apartment building went from an appraised value of \$287,000 to a new appraised value of \$670,600. We were able to grieve this new appraisal and we did get a reduction, however, it was not enough to prevent our having to raise all of our rents which we would not have done otherwise. Despite the increases, we are still renting at below market rate as we struggle to maintain our desire to provide affordable clean spaces for people working in the Burlington area.

We are now retired and living on a fixed income. The 2021 reappraisal has already taken a bite out of our income, a large portion of which, comes from our rental properties. If H.184 is not passed, we will be further impacted in no small way. We have taken the Lead Abatement training classes and been certified to work around lead paint. Having completed a total renovation on our building in Burlington, both inside and out, we only have the upkeep on each apartment to contend with and which we do

ourselves. If the new Health Department regulations are allowed to stay in place we will once again be faced with increasing our rents. With the lack of affordable housing throughout Vermont the impact that those regulations will have on “mom and pop” landlords, like us, will only serve to exacerbate this situation and it is completely unnecessary. We would like to be able to remain responsible landlords while maintaining our retirement income. Please vote yes on H.184.

I am attaching a few “before” and “after” photos of the work that we have done to create nice affordable housing in Burlington. The photos show the same area in two of our apartments before and after our renovation. The “before” photos are an example of what the entire building looked like inside when we purchased it.

We also request that our letter be placed in the Committees Public Record for consideration of H. 184.

Respectfully,  
Tracy Howard









