

Hello, my name is Dan Blau, thank you for having me.

I moved to Vermont from Boston in 2012. I was a renter in Chittenden County for about eight years until my partner and I bought a home in the Old North End of Burlington. We were privileged to have ended up in such a vibrant and diverse community. We love our neighborhood and would feel lucky if our first home ended up as our forever home. Our little street is made up of about 50% rentals and 50% owner occupied homes, which is a little more ownership than the City in general.

Unfortunately, Burlington has a vacancy rate of less than 1%, and about a third of renters spend more than 50% of their income on housing. This and the lack of available units, even above market rate, continues to shrink the middle class. It is not possible for most of our neighbors to save up and purchase a home in the community in which they live.

This level of housing insecurity has no doubt contributed to the shocking increase in substance abuse and homelessness plaguing our beloved Queen City. These issues have been building for years and it's now too late for small, incremental change. We need radical solutions, before we reach a breaking point.

Vermonters deserve legislation that has proven broadly popular like just-cause eviction protection and rental registries. But that is not enough to reverse the trend. We also need caps on annual rental increases, right of first refusal, and support for tenant unions. This ultimately comes down to what kind of society we want to live in. We should agree to protect the many (tenants) and stop privileging the few (landlords).

Thank you all for your time and hard work.