

Date: February 26, 2026

To: Chair Marc Mihaly & House General Committee members

From: Erhard Mahnke, Retired, Office of Sen. Bernie Sanders & Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition

**Subject:** Please hit pause on H.772

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I respectfully request that you push pause on H.722. I realize a lot of work and committee time has gone into the bill. I also realize that it may have started out as a well-intentioned effort to balance landlord and tenant interests and address long-standing priorities for both sides. However, as currently drafted, this bill is thoroughly imbalanced in favor of landlord interests and, while it includes some provisions that protect tenant interests, these are woefully inadequate in light of the serious erosion of tenants' due process protections. I urge you to take a break from this bill, think about it over Town Meeting Break, and consider it from a fresh perspective when you return on March 10. It will still have a week to work its way through the other House committees of jurisdiction.

My request comes from the perspective of someone who spent 25 years at the state house advocating for the interests of the affordable housing community and homelessness service providers, as well as three years as a Vermont Outreach Representative and Housing Policy Advisor for Senator Bernie Sanders. I am also the owner of an owner-occupied duplex and served for 30 years on the board of Northgate Housing, the largest nonprofit affordable housing development in the state, which saw numerous necessary evictions during my tenure. I have seen this issue from both sides.

For this bill to create greater balance in the inherent power and financial imbalance between landlords and tenants, it should include:

- Elimination of no-cause evictions, including automatically renewing leases for tenants in compliance with their lease and with a few common-sense exemptions as noted in H.772
- Rent stabilization - CPI plus 1% or 2% with a 7% maximum
- The right to legal representation for tenants in eviction cases
- Limitation of one month's rent as security deposit
- Routine statewide minimum habitability inspections for all rental housing by Fire Safety
- A publicly accessible database of key information for all rental property
- Prohibition of application fees
- Confidentiality for eviction records

Barring inclusion of some, or all, of these provisions, we should not be talking about shortening the eviction process at all junctures – with one exception in the case of criminal and/or violent behavior that affects the right of other tenants to peaceful enjoyment of their rentals.

Moreover, you heard compelling testimony from the Judiciary that they are unable to meet the timeline outlined in H.772. If you want to make the eviction process more timely, provide greater

resources to the Judiciary to take up landlord-tenant cases and/or create a pilot landlord-tenant court.

I would also urge you to enhance provisions in the bill that help mitigate challenging tenancies for landlords: rental arrearage funding, landlord liaison services, and landlord-tenant education.

This committee has done amazing work to help alleviate our current housing and homelessness crisis. Do not undo that work by passing this bill out of committee today. As currently drafted, there is no doubt that it will dramatically exacerbate that crisis.