

Dear Representative,

I'm writing as a small business owner and employer in Chittenden County. I also own one duplex, which helps provide stability and income for my family of six. I'm not a corporate landlord. I'm exactly the kind of local housing provider Vermont depends on to keep modest, well-maintained units in the market.

I have serious concerns with H.772 as written, and I urge you to consider the following targeted amendments:

1. **Rent control provisions.**

This section effectively imposes rent control and severely limits a housing provider's ability to respond to rising taxes, insurance, utilities, and maintenance costs. I strongly urge the committee to strike this section in its entirety. I cannot support a bill that includes rent control provisions. If the state can continue to increase property taxes at whim, we should be able to increase rental rates as the market allows.

2. **Application fees / credit checks.**

The bill should clearly allow housing providers to pass through the actual cost of a credit check to applicants. As written, this shifts unavoidable screening costs onto small landlords and discourages responsible vetting which could lead to higher eviction volume adding burden to an already taxed court system.

3. **Security deposit cap (2× monthly rent).**

While I understand the intent, the bill should explicitly allow an additional pet deposit, as Burlington ultimately did after encountering unintended consequences. Without this, many landlords will simply stop allowing pets.

4. **Habitability as a defense to nonpayment.**

Allowing habitability issues to serve as a complete defense to nonpayment without requiring tenants to follow existing notice and cure procedures creates a roadmap for abuse. Any such defense should require documented notice, reasonable time to cure, and failure to repair.

5. **Confidentiality of eviction records.**

Making eviction cases confidential by default — especially no-cause cases — prevents housing providers from identifying active eviction proceedings during screening. This undermines risk management and will ultimately reduce willingness to rent to marginal applicants. This higher risk to housing providers will likely result in higher rents to adjust for said risks.

My concern is not theoretical. Policies like these push small, local landlords out of the market, reduce housing supply, and accelerate consolidation by larger, out-of-state owners who can absorb regulatory risk. That outcome hurts tenants and communities alike.

I respectfully ask that you advocate for these changes and ensure that H.772 does not unintentionally punish the very people providing stable, local housing.

Thank you for your time and for considering the perspective of small housing providers.

Sincerely,

--

Jason H. Burds