

Hi Representative Mihaly,

I am writing to you as a Burlington Resident, a fellow RPCV (Panama 2015-2017), and a current employee of Vermont Legal Aid. I wanted to make sure you considered the Vermont Legal Aid press release from a couple of days ago.

Here are a couple highlights:

"As written, this bill guts tenants' procedural due process rights in a variety of ways, including eliminating a tenant's right to a jury trial -- a fundamental right guaranteed to all Vermonters in our state's constitution. It would allow a landlord to evict someone who refused to accept a landlord's changes to a lease already in effect. It adds multiple additional grounds for eviction based on nothing more than the landlord's unchallenged accusations against a tenant. It drastically reduces or even eliminates the days of required notice before the tenant's termination date. It also substantially reduces the time a tenant has to answer an eviction complaint from 21 days to a mere 5 or 7 days after they have been served with the court papers, increasing the likelihood that many tenants won't be able to answer on time, defend themselves against an unfair eviction, or get legal help, back rent, or other assistance to resolve the problem."

"From 2019 to 2024, Vermont's rental vacancy rate dropped from 4.5% to just 2.1%. During this same period, median gross rent jumped 34.6%..."

Appealing to the inherent worth and dignity of all humans (even the unhoused, or those that have been labeled as "bad tenants") does not seem like enough these days. This makes me incredibly sad. Let me try another, more personal tactic...My wife and I both work in professions where we help people. We always have, and plan to do so moving forward--it feels like our responsibility in this world we have inherited. I am 34 and my wife is about to turn 30. Even with the luck of some intergenerational wealth in my family, we cannot afford to buy a home in Chittenden County. We may be able to do so in the next year or so, and will have to be house poor for years if we want to do this. Why is this? It is most certainly NOT because it is too hard for landlords to evict tenants.

Increasingly, Vermont is mirroring national trends. The rich are not paying their fair share into the system, and have the means to successfully lobby policy makers to continue to make their lives easier. I have so many friends in colleagues who are in their 30s, doing amazing work, and just not in a position to buy a home. We are squeezed by the economy left to us, and we KNOW that the wealth of landlords is not going to magically trickle down to us.

Putting my neighbors on the streets is not going to help. Our social service systems have been gutted at the same time that they are being stretched thin. If we need anything it is an increased tax on second home owners. Or rental caps that make it harder for people to profit off of another human's right to shelter. Please do not give in and do the bidding of the Landlord Association. Listen to your fellow Legal Aiders who know that we are still

far away from a world in which we have equal access to justice. Stripping away rights from our most vulnerable is not even close to the solution. I hope you will consider drastic improvements to this bill, or else a no vote.

Thank you for your consideration,

-Jeffrey Maier