

To Chairman Marc Mihaly and General and Housing committee members.

This email is intended for all Vermont's Legislators but specifically for those legislators on the committees charged with addressing Vermont's housing crisis. (I apologize for the length of this email but I didn't have time to write a shorter one.)

Yes- there is a housing crisis but if we work together together and use our heads we can get through it. If we knock heads things will only get worse.

Commissioner Kerrick Johnson and Secretary Julie Moore wrote an Editorial that stated that there is a huge shortage of home in Vermont (30-40,000 homes) and that part of the problem is the permit process that adds time and huge expenses to acquire permits to build, driving up costs and causing delays. Last month I had an article published in Vermont Daily Chronical entitled Punishing Landlords Won't Solve the Housing Crisis. Not something that I do very often or particularly enjoy but it was pretty well received. The Herald of Randolph contacted me asking if I would like it publish it in their paper which I appreciated. Please check them out.

For the record I have been a Realtor and a landlord for decades so I have some experience. I am contacting our lawmakers as an unofficial spokesperson for all landlords asking for the opportunity for me and others to address those our concerns. I am not the biggest broker or landlord in the state but get by comfortably most of the time. And I like it most of the time.

I have become more active with other landlords discussing the issues we all experiences. **The general consensus seems to be that the eviction process is one of our biggest problems. It is time consuming and expensive, and totally geared to favor problem tenants- NOT responsible tenants or landlords but problem tenants.** If authorities just crack down on the problem tenants most will come around and act more responsibly before becoming homeless. Rewarding bad behavior perpetuates bad behavior- not unlike buying a child a toy so they will just stop embarrassing temper tantrums in a store. **Nobody wants to see people removed from their home but unfortunately sometimes it is necessary to remove problem tenants to keep a property livable for responsible tenants and protect the owner's investment. We have all lost good tenants that just move out because a disruptive neighbor makes living there unbearable and nothing can be done about it- often as a result of drugs and alcohol abuse.**

Just think about it! Landlords are in the rental business- NOT the eviction business. Long term tenants make us very happy. Some have stayed 10 and 20 years. That makes my life easy, keeps expenses down and we become friends. Plus it helps keep rent down. Turnovers are expensive and expenses mean increases.

In the last year I have had one tenant that moved in and simply paid almost nothing for 8 months, two that suffered medical issues that prevented them working for 4-5 months and a couple that were seriously injured in an auto accident preventing them from working for several months. (That story gets worse but that is for another day.) I saw little to no rent

from any of them for that period but my expenses didn't stop. State officials said there was no help for them but suggested that I just evict them. (Sounds easy- doesn't it!!!) None of them would vacate so I am now in middle of my second Motion to Evict and to Pay Rent Into Court (not pay me). These are all problem tenants and they feel they don't need to pay rent but were intitled to live there-free.

A couple weeks ago a very responsible tenant advised me that she will be vacating because the company she was working for was sold, on Christmas was advised her job no longer existed and the building was being auctioned. She did not want to leave and I did not want her to leave but without a job she know she could not pay rent so she did the right thing and has started moving. She did not expect to stay there for free!

My point here is that if a tenant can't or won't pay the state should step up and help. **Those who just won't pay should be quickly removed and those that actually can't work should get financial assistance from the government and not from the property owners.** Understand that I do not like to see people 'unhoused' but it is not the landlords responsibility to provide this housing for free.

Another example a couple years ago was when "three 50+ year old grandmothers just want a place to call home so their grandchildren could visit" and wanted to get out of the motels where they were being 'housed'. I thought this will be great! I imagined tea parties and knitting gatherings but boy was I wrong. Two of the three had long histories of drug abuse- as did their visitors. The three grandmother got along with each other (sort of) for a little while but then it all went south fast. When not fighting with each other they would harass the responsible tenant. State Police were called multiple times but nothing improved. That responsible tenant's sons stopped bring the grandchildren to visit because they didn't want them exposed to all that nonsense so the good one moved out?

I heard of and have reviewed some of the proposed legislation that is designed to protect tenants from being displaced, limit rent increases, and generally restrict landlords from best managing their property. Other proposed legislation is designed to protect property owners that provide the much needed housing. There has to be reasonable middle ground that protects everyone or there will be less housing and higher rents.

Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that the committees dealing with housing invite me and other housing providers to meet with them. We would appreciate an opportunity to present the realities of being a landlord and share our experiences and concerns. We need to work together because we are all on the same team, that is, providing housing to Vermonters.

I am told nobody wants to hear about **my** issues and problems with tenants and to keep my comments more generic and less specific. But my problems are the same problems every other landlord experiences even if the names are different or the details may not be exactly the same but so very similar. **Please let us share a few of our experiences and ask yourself how you would respond.**

Landlords would be more willing to give people a chance when they are experiencing hard times whether from loss of a job, health reasons or divorce, etc. Sometimes we would really like to take the chance but unfortunately all the promises and good intentions have no value and can not be collected if there is no money to back them up. I am in the third eviction of the year and it will cost me about \$12,000 in legal fees and months of lost rents so as much as I might like to, I am less likely to want to give people a chance in the future.

If society is of the opinion that certain people are experiencing hardship and need help, society should step in and help. That burden should not be put on the backs of the property owners. The tax collector, the banks and the fuel and power companies still expect to be paid. It is not that I don't think sometimes everyone needs a break but they just can't live for free or everyone else's rents will have to increase. Mine certainly have!

I respectfully request the opportunity for those of us who provide the housing the chance to meet with and talk with the legislative committees and come up with a plan that works for everyone. Several landlords have expressed interest in meeting with you.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

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