

Dear Representative,

I am an ordinary landlord, a carpenter with a high school education, investing in a couple ancient Vermont properties to try to secure my retirement, using my hands and knowledge.

I am not a lawyer, and do not understand most of the confounding language in H 772, though I do sense that it attempts to diminish my rights as a property owner to conduct business with tenants on a level playing field.

I find it unacceptable that the bill attempts to hide public information about a tenant's negative eviction history while simultaneously enlisting landlords to report "positive" rental history to a credit reporting agency. This is an attempt to whitewash the truth and lure unsuspecting landlords into renting to tenants who have proven to be high risk.

While I am encouraged that the bill makes an effort to simplify timelines for eviction procedure, it is no consolation for the control it imposes on rent increases and deposits. Runaway inflation and property taxes will not stop because I'm low on funds. I am not able to absorb costs without passing them on to tenants. My business model would collapse.

I have a good relationship with my tenants, as they are my customers and economic partners. My success depends on their success. Vacancy is the biggest money loser in the rental business. I don't want to evict anyone, but I have had a few horror stories in my sixteen years of landlording. Wrenching human circumstances, violence, drug addiction and unimaginable squalor have led to many thousands of dollars lost and lessons learned the hard way. Landlords need to protect themselves from these circumstances. Please don't make it harder to get rid of bad tenants, or know their eviction history. No Cause eviction is necessary when circumstances don't easily fit into a well wrapped legal package. Tenants get free legal aid by experts who can drag out the process and get free rent for six months or more. The playing field is already not level. Please don't make it worse.

H 772 while making some concessions to landlords, is a net loss for us. Please understand that we are ordinary people with mortgages trying to provide habitat for people at a reasonable price, while facing costs beyond our control. The legislative agenda is chock full of bills that attack our business model, as if punishing us is the solution for the housing crisis. When was the last time the legislature asked landlords how to create more housing? Invite us, we have ideas! Apartments sit empty because landlords are terrified of getting stuck with someone who is a bad economic liability. We are drowning in regulations that drive up our costs. There is a solution. The legislature needs to consult the people who are actually providing the housing instead of demonizing them.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Wilder Wheelock,

Colchester VT