

Dear Members of the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs,

I am writing to submit written testimony in opposition to H.462, relating to approval of an amendment to the City of Burlington's charter concerning just-cause eviction.

Attached for the Committee's reference is a document from the prior legislative and municipal consideration of this charter change (formerly H.448). This document summarizes the evidentiary record and policy analysis that informed earlier review and highlights several concerns that remain relevant to the Committee's deliberations.

In brief, the prior record shows that:

- Proponents relied primarily on statewide projections and anecdotal evidence rather than empirical data specific to Burlington or Chittenden County. Even supporters acknowledged that no Burlington-specific evidence demonstrated that no-cause evictions were a material problem locally.
- Available estimates indicated that non-renewal-based evictions represented a very small fraction of rental outcomes, and Vermont already has one of the lowest eviction rates in the nation.
- Claims that no-cause evictions mask discrimination based on race, family status, or receipt of public assistance were not supported by Vermont-specific data, and proponents explicitly acknowledged the absence of such evidence.
- Studies cited in support of the policy were drawn from large metropolitan areas with housing markets and demographics that differ substantially from Burlington, and the authors of those studies cautioned against generalizing their findings.
- Peer-reviewed research on just-cause eviction policies identifies credible risks of unintended consequences, including reduced rental supply, higher rents, lower vacancy rates, and increased litigation—outcomes that could exacerbate Burlington's already constrained housing market.

From a Government Operations perspective, these issues raise concerns about whether this charter change is supported by a sufficiently robust, local evidentiary record and whether its potential impacts have been adequately evaluated before legislative approval. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee not to advance H.462.

In addition, Burlington has since removed from its servers the evidence that was used in evaluating the charter change. I have updated my citations accordingly and have attached Vermont Legal Aid's memorandum that was used to promote the charter change. Thank you for your time and for your careful consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,
Rich Ketcham
Burlington, VT