



Date: April 23, 2026

To: Senate Judiciary Committee members

From: Chad Simmons, Executive Director, Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont (HHAV)

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on [H.772 \(as passed by the house\)](#).

HHAV represents organizations and individuals from every corner of the state focused on creating and maintaining affordable housing, homelessness prevention and emergency shelter, human rights advocacy, youth organizations, funders, early childhood advocates and domestic and sexual violence advocates.

Today, I would like to share our members perspectives on H.772. A couple of important notes. First, as noted above, we represent a broad coalition and as such, perspectives on this bill are diverse and in many instances divergent. HHAV supports two narrow provisions requested by our non-profit housing members, protections for victims of domestic and sexual violence requested by the Vermont Network, and a focused review of the Vermont court eviction processes to identify efficiencies for housing-related court proceedings as well as what it would take to stand up a stand-alone housing court. We feel that this bill should be narrowly focused and incrementally improve court processes as it relates to rental agreements.

Secondly, HHAV has significant concerns with the broad application of expedited eviction and rental agreement termination processes. Research is clear that evictions can lead to increased homelessness and exacerbate mental health and financial instability. We are concerned that broadly expediting these processes will only deepen our housing and homelessness challenges in Vermont. Finally, I can't emphasize enough the importance to understand the interplay and connections between H.938 (Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum bill) and H.772. We are concerned that significant changes to how we respond to homelessness coupled with the provisions of H.772 as well as state and federal appropriations for affordable housing investments and critical homelessness prevention and emergency shelter resources will again exacerbate our housing and homelessness challenges. Over the next couple of weeks, we urge the committee to work in collaboration with Senate Judiciary, Health & Welfare and Appropriations committees and (if/when it gets to that point) House conferees to ensure these two significant pieces of legislation are aligned, have the requisite state appropriations and the timelines are adequate.

**HHAV supports the following investments:**

- \$1M for VSHA Rental Assistance Fund (eviction prevention) (currently in H.951, FY27 budget) [https://www.vsha.org/eviction\\_prevention/](https://www.vsha.org/eviction_prevention/)  
This program a targeted, court-based intervention designed to prevent eviction for nonpayment of rent only when a tenancy is sustainable and eviction is imminent. By requiring a filed eviction and verifying a household's ability to maintain rent going

**Non-profit housing members seeking targeted, expedited relief in two areas:**

- Shorter termination notice period based on acts of violence, damage or activity which threatens the safety of other residents. This expedited process should be clearly focused on acts that threaten tenant safety and the acts are part of a pattern. Specifically, we support section 1, pages 8 (16-20) and page 9 (lines 1-2) with the following edits (in red):

(2) When termination is based on **criminal activity**, ~~illegal drug activity~~, acts of violence, ~~damage to the dwelling unit or premises, or other activity~~, any of which ~~threaten~~ **is an ongoing or repeated** ~~threatens to the health or~~ safety of other residents, ~~the landlord or landlord's agent, or neighbors~~, the landlord may terminate the tenancy by providing actual notice to the tenant of the date on which the tenancy will terminate, which shall be at least ~~14~~ five days from the date of the actual notice.

- Ability to issue a trespass order to a tenant's invitee if the tenant consents, the invitee violates the terms of the rental agreement or state or federal law is violated. We support the language in the bill, as is, section 5, page 25, lines 10-19 and page 26, lines 1-6.

**Why we support our non-profit housing members in their request:**

- Our nonprofit members provide rental agreements that include strong tenant protections including rent stabilization, automatically renewing leases and the absence of no-cause evictions. Most importantly, they provide deeply affordable, safe and accessible housing to people across the state.
- Provide resident services as well as partner with other social service organizations to provide critical services.
- Between 2020-2025, the non-profit network provided housing to 2,033 formerly homeless households.
- Median tenant income of Vermont's LIHTC-funded housing (most accurate way to assess tenant median income) is \$18,000 per year.
- 36% of new leases go to formerly homeless households.
- Since 2020, VHCB funded housing (the majority of which are developed by the non-profit network) has housed and sheltered over 5,700 households. Many more households are served by pre-existing housing built with past investments. There are just under [15,000 publicly subsidized rental homes in Vermont](#).

**HHAV also supports:**

- Language proposing a focused review of housing-related and eviction court proceedings as well as what it would take to stand up a stand-alone housing-focused court docket. The review should include an analysis of how long court proceedings take, what steps could be taken to expedite the process, while maintaining due process, what resources would be needed by the judiciary and steps that would be needed to implement the findings. HHAV also supports crafting a proposal that would create a stand-alone docket, focused solely on handling eviction cases.
- Overdose protections. We agree with the new provision stipulating a rental agreement cannot be terminated based on a person seeking medical assistance for a drug overdose. This is a critical health and safety provision that will save lives.
- VT Network language for domestic and sexual violence protections. We support the Vermont Network’s proposal to ensure tenants can report instances of violence without fear or risk of losing their housing.
- 90-day notice protections for no-cause notice. While this bill does not adequately address no-cause evictions, this increased amount of time when a no-cause notice is given allows a tenant more time to find housing.

**Why we have concerns with broadly expediting rental agreement terminations and eviction processes:**

By expediting evictions, Vermont may see an increase in evictions. HHAV is deeply concerned with the immediate and long-term impacts, including:

- [Evictions directly increase homelessness](#). Studies show that people who were evicted are significantly more likely to use emergency shelters in the period following their eviction and they spend more time in emergency shelter than individuals who were not evicted.
- [Evictions negatively impact physical and mental health](#). Evictions are linked to increased hospital visits and higher rates of depression. For children, eviction threatens developmental, social, and academic success.
- [Annual earnings following an eviction](#) decreased by an average of roughly \$1300 in the first year, and \$2400 in the second year amounting to a nearly 15 percent drop in income (from a sample baseline of \$17,200 per year).

**Additional improvements to this bill:**

- Move the effective date of this bill beyond July 1, 2026 (section 11, page 32 line 8). Anything before January 1, 2027 seems unrealistic and we encourage the committee to explore a date later than this.
- Strike the provision in its entirety allowing landlords to charge for background and credit checks. There should not be a financial barrier to applying for and accessing housing (section 1, page 4, lines 4-12).
- Change the security deposit section to make it clear and explicit that municipalities that stipulate a security deposit cap of less than two months of rent are allowed to implement that more stringent cap. Add the following language to section 1, page 5, starting on line 3:

A municipality may institute an ordinance that caps the security deposit below two months' rent.

- Restore the provision allowing a tenant to pay partial rent payment to the court in an expedited hearing for nonpayment of rent (section 3, page 18 line 15).

(d) If the court finds the tenant is obligated to pay rent and has failed to do so, the court shall order full **or partial** payment into court of rent as it accrues while the proceeding is pending and rent accrued from the date of filing with the court the complaint for ejectment or the date the summons and complaint for ejectment were served on the tenant pursuant to Rule 3 of the Vermont Rules of Civil Procedure, whichever occurs first.

- Align state FY27 appropriations investments with the needs identified in both H.772 and H.938. These include: investments in permanently affordable housing investments; homelessness and eviction prevention; fair housing education and advocacy; emergency shelter and case management investments.