

MEMO

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Fr: Leaders of Vermont's housing nonprofits (*see list at end*)

Re: Why we support H.772

Da: April 14, 2026

The state's housing nonprofit organizations cover every corner and county of Vermont, collectively providing rental housing to over 8,300 households.

We are writing to ask you to support H.772 because under current law and court processes we are unable to protect our tenants, protect our staff, and ensure the sustainability of our properties. As always, we are willing to engage with you on how the bill may be improved to better serve all Vermonters while still accomplishing these goals.

Our tenants are working Vermonters, older Vermonters, and/or Vermonters living with disabilities. Roughly a quarter of them were unhoused prior to securing their apartment.

Our organizations have been tasked by the State to serve the most vulnerable people in our communities, and even more so since the pandemic. This is our mission, and we have been trying to meet the needs of our tenants across the state by increasing the services we offer.

When someone lives in one of our apartments, they have security of tenure – meaning if they abide by the lease and pay the rent, they will have their lease renewed. Rents are stabilized and only increase with the actual cost to operate the property (including property taxes as our properties are *not* tax exempt).

We promise our tenants housing that is safe, secure, and stable.

But too often, in recent years, we cannot fulfill this promise because of limitations in the State's laws and because of lengthy court processes. That's why we support H.772.

Specifically:

- Addressing threats to the safety of others. When a tenant or guest engages in violent, illegal, or threatening activity towards others, we don't have the tools to protect the people living around them, or our staff. H.772 allows us to move quickly to prevent harm to others by reducing the notice time for a lease termination, accompanied by a sworn statement that identifies the risk. If the threat remains, the bill allows a motion to be filed requesting an expedited process that mimics other timeframes in Superior Court. The threshold for this process is that *there's an ongoing risk*; the ability to move faster is critical to supporting the vulnerable tenants living in the building.
- Issuing No Trespass orders. In our experiences, tenants are sometimes preyed upon by others, and we have few tools to support them. As victims, they often feel threatened to the extent that

they will not speak up. Drug dealing enterprises, especially, have exploited this loophole in the law as it allows people to set up their business under the safety of someone else's home. H.772 gives us the opportunity to be our tenants' advocates and rid a property of people taking advantage of them and others by adding specific conditions that allow a property owner to issue a no trespass order.

- Ensuring staff safety. Our organizations all have stories of violence, threats, or other concerns that current law prevents us from addressing, which is extremely frustrating. Most of our organizations have apartments that are on watch lists requiring two staff to visit; some apartments are assessed as too dangerous for us to even enter. Current situations are also causing enough stress and concern among staff that we are having a hard time retaining and recruiting – even as all of us have increased our resident services staffing to engage with tenants and connect them to other services and work to prevent evictions.
- Supporting sustainability. While our primary concern is the safety of our tenants and our staff, we are also seeing a significant impact on our financial stability. When the aspirational goal of resolving an eviction case in the courts is six months and the courts meet that goal 80% of the time, that means that 20% of the time it's not met. We now spend more money on security than in the past, more on attorneys, and are carrying larger rental arrears than pre-pandemic. Collectively, this amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars that could be spent in more productive ways. It also threatens the long-term financial stability of our properties.

Please support H.772. Any of us are willing to speak with you more about our experiences and the growing concerns over the last several years. Thank you.

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