



March 25, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Room 35, Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for 2024 – H 7304 – An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act

Dear Chairman Craven,

On behalf of Crossroads Rhode Island, I am writing to express support for 2024 – H 7304. The mission of Crossroads Rhode Island is to help homeless or at-risk individuals and families secure stable homes. They achieve this by engaging in our range of services including housing, basic needs, shelter, case management, referrals, and education and employment services.

This population faces compounding barriers to accessing housing. The current and ongoing volatility of unit prices is one such barrier. The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that a \$100 increase in median rent is associated with a 9% increase in the estimated homelessness rate. If forced to move due to increased rent, tenants enter a competitive market with few affordable and available units. Many renters remain at risk of not being able to stay in their homes, a pressure that disproportionately impacts people of color and low-income households.

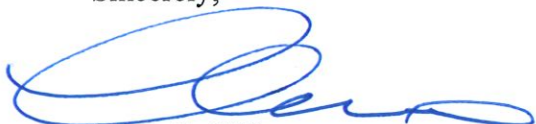
Prohibiting landlords from increasing rent without a 30-day notice gives tenants time to financially prepare as well as time to find alternative housing. Inflation has also contributed to a decrease in households' buying power. Prices have been rising faster than the average income. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that average hourly earnings decreased 3 percent over the year when adjusted for inflation. Combined with the nationwide lack of affordable housing, households are struggling to keep up with the price of rent. According to the latest U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey 8.8 million people were behind on their rent payments from April 27–May 9, 2022. This represents an increase of 1.7 million individuals from the same week one year ago. More than 60 percent were behind on only two months' rent or less, suggesting that even a little rental assistance could help them catch up.

To combat this barrier to housing security and to reduce homelessness, Rhode Island must prohibit landlords from increasing rent without notice to tenants. Adding and expanding rent control protections such as H7304 can successfully help to promote housing stability for tenants.

Through the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, Rhode Island can affirm that housing is a human right and tackle this housing issue alongside other states across the U.S., including New York, New Jersey, California, Oregon, and Maryland

Thank you to Representative Speakman and her co-sponsors for their leadership and thank you to the honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee for your consideration of this impactful legislation.

Sincerely,



Michelle Wilcox  
President Interim CEO  
Crossroads Rhode Island

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
The Honorable Representative June Speakman  
The Honorable Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos  
Nicole McCarty, Esq.