



May 28, 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: Support for H7304 Sub A – An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act**

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Central Providence Opportunities: A Health Equity Zone (CPO-HEZ), I write in support of House Bill 7304 Sub A introduced by Representative Jennifer Stewart. This bill would require landlords to give tenants 60 days' notice for a rental increase and give tenants 62 years old or older at least 120 days' notice. By giving tenants more time to assess whether they can afford the rent increase and find other housing if they cannot, this bill would dramatically improve tenants' ability to maintain safe, secure, and affordable housing.

As members of CPO-HEZ, the 60+ organizations and community members that collaborate across Central Providence share a common goal: to improve the health, economic, and racial equity of residents of the 02908 and 02909 ZIP codes. CPO-HEZ has voted to endorse H7304 Sub A, as decided through its collective governing body comprised of organizational partners and residents of Central Providence, recognizing that tenant stability is a central component of community health and wellbeing. This decision builds on the work of the CPO-HEZ Housing Working Group, which seeks to identify policy priorities that improve racial equity in Central Providence.

Quality, affordable housing is necessary for every Rhode Islander. Housing stability, quality, and affordability are critical social determinants of health, meaning that they are environmental and social conditions that affect health. Overwhelming housing costs, as well as poor living conditions and housing instability, deepen already existing health disparities within Providence. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our State's ambitious and effective policies – among them, the eviction moratorium and distribution of funds for rent relief – acknowledged the intrinsic connection between housing and health.

In addition to being health equity issues, tenants' rights are racial equity issues. While 53% of white Providence residents are renters, 65% of Providence's Black population rents, and 66% of

the Latinx population, according to [Housing Works RI](#). Of those renters, all are similarly cost burdened by their housing expenses: 46% of white and Latinx renters and 51% of Black residents are paying more than a third of their gross income toward housing costs. Rental costs are increasingly rising in Providence, with reports that Providence had the [highest rental increases of any major U.S. city](#) from 2023-2024. In Providence, evictions have increased since COVID-19, and Black and Latinx renters are overrepresented in eviction filings. Evictions are often a barrier to finding future housing options. Thus, it is critical that the legislature support bills, like H7304 Sub A, that strengthen tenants' rights in Providence and across Rhode Island.

This bill would shift landlord-tenant power dynamics, which are often inequitable and leave renters vulnerable to unpredictable changes in their housing. Historical and ongoing structural racism and discrimination in housing and economic opportunity have reinforced and perpetuate these inequities that harm all Rhode Islanders, but harm renters of color most acutely. By redressing these power dynamics and centering tenant health and well-being, H7304 Sub A would hopefully improve both housing quality and housing stability for Rhode Island renters, especially those earning the lowest incomes and Black and Latinx renters.

By increasing the amount of notice tenants are given about rent increases, H7304 Sub A acknowledges that 30-day notices (or 60-day for tenants over 62 years of age) of rent increases do not give tenants enough time to develop a feasible, dignified relocation plan, if needed. The current housing market is tight and has few affordable and available units. Although H7304 Sub A would not alleviate this scarcity of affordable housing, it would offer some relief to tenants seeking a new unit, or to financially prepare to pay the new rental increase.

**CPO-HEZ urges the Committee to pass H7304 Sub A.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anusha Venkataraman  
Managing Director of ONE Central Providence, ONE Neighborhood Builders  
Backbone organization to CPO-HEZ