

Roberta DiMezza

From: Kellie Marcil <user@votervoice.net>
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2025 1:20 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: OPPOSE H5103 - MAKING CRIMINALS PROTECTED CLASS

Dear Committee Clerk DiMezza,

Trust me, I understand the concerns around discrimination, but I have a personal experience that highlights the importance of transparency. Recently, I sold a nine-unit building, and during the process, the potential buyer ran a background check. They found that a sexual predator had used my property address as a mailing address. If that had been true, it could have derailed the sale, but we were able to prove that this person was never a tenant.

In another building I own, there are several single women living there, and one of their concerns was whether any sex offenders lived in the building. I believe it's important to be honest with potential tenants.

Ultimately, the question is: would you want to know if a convicted criminal was living next door to you?

Rhode Island House Bill 5103, which prohibits landlords from inquiring about or discriminating against applicants based on prior incarceration, could have negative consequences for both landlords and tenants by limiting landlords' ability to properly screen tenants and maintain safe, stable housing environments.

How This Hurts Landlords:

Increased Risk & Liability – Landlords would be forced to rent without knowing if a potential tenant has a criminal background that could pose safety concerns for neighbors and other tenants.

Property Damage & Non-Payment Risk – Some criminal offenses (such as fraud or property crimes) may indicate a higher likelihood of lease violations, unpaid rent, or damage to rental units. Without access to incarceration history, landlords cannot fully assess risk.

Insurance & Legal Issues – If landlords cannot screen for incarceration history, they may face higher premiums or legal liability if a tenant with a violent history harms another tenant or the property.

Reduced Control Over Property – Private property owners should have the right to vet tenants who will live in their buildings. This bill removes landlords' discretion in making informed decisions.

How This Hurts Other Tenants & Communities:

Safety Concerns – Existing tenants may feel unsafe if landlords are unable to consider criminal history when selecting renters. In cases involving violent crimes, this could lead to higher crime rates in rental properties.

Tenant Retention Issues – If responsible, long-term tenants feel unsafe due to questionable rental decisions, they may move elsewhere, leading to higher turnover rates and instability in rental communities.

Discourages New Housing Development – If landlords face more restrictions on screening, they may choose to convert rental properties into condominiums or short-term rentals, reducing the overall rental supply and increasing rents.

Conclusion:

While the bill intends to prevent discrimination against individuals with a criminal record, it undermines landlords' ability to ensure safe and reliable tenancies and may lead to unintended negative consequences, such as higher rental costs, safety risks, and reduced housing availability. A better solution would be balanced legislation that allows for rehabilitation while still giving landlords the ability to make informed decisions about their properties.

Sincerely,

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