



March 18, 2025

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

**RE: Support for HB 5264 – An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act and
HB 5503 – An Act Relating to Property – Residential Landlord and Tenant Act**

Dear 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 5264 introduced by Representative Potter, which would stabilize rents, and House Bill 5503 introduced by Representative Cruz, which would limit evictions to just causes. These bills would dramatically improve the ability for tenants to maintain safe, secure, and affordable housing.

As members of CPO-HEZ, the 60+ organizations 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.

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 across Providence. At the start of COVID-19, 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 and proved that political action to protect housing can also improve health outcomes.

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. Of those renters, all are similarly cost burdened by their housing expenses: 48% of white renters, 51% of Hispanic or Latinx renters, and 48% of Black renters are paying more than a third of their gross income toward housing costs, according to Housing Works RI's 2024 Housing Fact Book. Rental costs are increasingly rising throughout Rhode Island, with

reports that Providence had the highest rental increases of any major U.S. city from 2023-2024. In Providence, Black and Latinx renters are overrepresented in eviction filings. Eviction filings, even if the case is dismissed, can harm a tenant's ability to find housing for years to come. Just cause evictions already exist in multiple states and municipalities and make it more difficult for landlords to file frivolous evictions, which would promote housing stability.

HB 5264 would limit rent increases to no more than four percent (4%) annually (with reasonable exemptions), and HB 5503 would limit evictions to certain causes. These bills would protect tenants from unpredictable changes to their housing, improving conditions especially for Black and Latinx renters and low-income Rhode Islanders. These are essential pieces of legislation to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

I urge the Committee to support HB 5264 and HB 5503.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anusha Venkataraman
Managing Director, One Central Providence
One Neighborhood Builders