

Testimony in Support of H 5264
House Judiciary Committee
Submitted by Samuel Cramer
March 18, 2025

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

The Rhode Island Center for Justice submits this written testimony in support of passage of H 5264. The Center for Justice practices landlord tenant law and is one of two organizations in the state that represents tenants in substantial numbers. Each year we represent over 1,000 Rhode Islanders in court proceedings and advise thousands more about their rights under state and federal law. Through this work, we have become intimately familiar with the struggles faced by Rhode Islanders as they navigate a difficult and increasingly unaffordable housing market.

Providence currently stands out as a notable example of skyrocketing rental prices. As recently reported by the Providence Journal, Providence experienced the highest year-over-year increase in rent price in the nation, with median rents rising 16.18% between March 2023 and March 2024, reaching \$2,618¹. According to Rent, an apartment marketing website cited by the Providence Journal, rents in Providence have climbed 27% over the last three years², reflecting a market that continues to price Rhode Island families out of safe and stable housing.

These sharp increases in rent are not sustainable for the average Rhode Islander. While rents have climbed, wages have failed to keep pace, leaving families and individuals increasingly vulnerable to displacement. Rent stabilization, as proposed in H 5264, directly addresses this issue by limiting annual rent increases to a reasonable and predictable 4%. This bill balances tenant protection with landlords' legitimate interests, allowing landlords to exceed the 4% cap where demonstrable increases in municipal taxes or insurance occur or when essential improvements are made to dwellings. In these cases, the Secretary of Housing may grant exemptions, ensuring landlords are able to properly maintain and invest in their properties.

In our daily practice, many clients come to us facing eviction due to a rental increase that arrived with insufficient notice or that far exceeded their capacity to pay. For low-income Rhode Islanders, these increases translate to evictions and disruptions to their lives and livelihoods. By

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https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/2024/04/24/providence-ri-rent-prices-housing-report/73367621007/?itm_campaign=confirmation&itm_content=news&itm_medium=onsite&itm_source=onsite

² <https://www.rent.com/research/average-rent-price-report/>

placing a fair and predictable ceiling on rent increases, H 5264 creates stability in the housing market, helping tenants remain safely housed.

We urge this committee to recommend passage of this important protection that will stabilize rents, prevent displacement, and protect Rhode Island Tenants. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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