

February 20, 2024

Sen. Marilyn Moore
Rep. Maryam Kahn
Housing Committee
LOB Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: SB 143 AND HB 5156

Senator Moore, Representative Kahn and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Jessica Doll and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Apartment Association (CTAA), representing providers of more than 67,000 apartment homes throughout the state. We are housing providers, working every day to help Connecticut's individuals and families find—and stay in—quality, affordable rental homes in stable, safe communities.

As you will hear in testimony presented by CTAA members today, apartment owners and operators want long-term residents who renew their leases when they come to an end, yet there are times when a landlord needs to send a nonrenewal notice at the end of a lease. Sometimes, this is because a resident violates the lease agreement by repeatedly creating a situation that is unsafe, disruptive or threatening to the residents or staff of the apartment community. These are called “lapse-of-time” non-renewals, they are necessary—and they are rare.

According to 2023 data from the Connecticut Judicial Branch, lapse-of-time non-renewals are a small percentage of total evictions, used only 11 percent of the time in Bridgeport, 7.7 percent in East Hartford, 8.2 percent in Hartford, 8 percent in New Britain, 17 percent in New Haven, 12 percent in Norwalk, 11 percent in Norwich, 7.7 percent in Stamford and 9 percent in Waterbury.

A lease is a contract—with rights, responsibilities and a start and end date agreed to by both parties. Yet SB 143, AN ACT CONCERNING EVICTIONS FOR CAUSE, would effectively rewrite and nullify every lease.

The people and families who we house deserve to have a stable sense of home in their apartments, they should be able to report poor housing conditions without fear of retaliation—which is illegal under both state and federal law—and landlords should respond rapidly. Period.

SB 143, however, will backfire on the people in Connecticut's apartment communities it seeks to protect. This is why Vermont Governor Phil Scott vetoed a similar bill in 2022. In his veto message, attached to my testimony, he said:

By eliminating a property owner's ability to end a lease agreement at the time of the mutually agreed upon end date within a lease, this ‘just cause eviction’ law effectively creates the potential for perpetual tenancy, undermining private property rights and a foundational principle of choosing to rent your property.

By making it exceedingly difficult to remove tenants from a rental unit, even at the end of a signed lease, my fear is this bill will discourage property owners from renting to vulnerable prospective tenants, or to rent their units at all. Instead, more preference will be given to renters with high credit scores, no criminal history and positive references from previous landlords, creating further disparity for Vermonters. This will increase both costs and inequity in the housing market.

No housing provider or renter wants to be in an eviction situation.

HB 5156 – AN ACT REQUIRING NOTICES OF RENT INCREASES requires that housing providers send a 60-day rent increase notice to residents protected under 47a-23c. Yet when read along with SB 143 it appears to create contradictions and require new, undefined standards to determine the fairness of rent levels.

Please do not erase the mutually agreed-upon leases with these two bills. Our leases embody the rights and responsibilities that our member housing providers and residents have to one another. Instead, let's work together to reinforce transparency and consistency in the renting process so everyone knows, is protected by and benefits from the rules.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Doll
Executive Director
Connecticut Apartment Association

PHILIP B. SCOTT
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 3, 2022

The Honorable BetsyAnn Wrask
Clerk of the Vermont House of Representatives
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Ms. Wrask:

Pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution, I am returning H.708, *An Act Relating to Approval of Amendments to the Charter of the City of Burlington*, without my signature.

Investing in housing has been and continues to be a top priority of my Administration. The lack of housing working Vermonters can afford is a significant challenge that contributes to our crisis of affordability and impairs our ability to keep and attract the families we need to revitalize our communities.

In addition to supporting investments and policies that will address Vermont's housing affordability crisis, we must not add policies that will remove much-needed housing units from the market. By eliminating a property owner's ability to end a lease agreement at the time of the mutually agreed upon end date within a lease, this "just cause eviction" law effectively creates the potential for perpetual tenancy, undermining private property rights and a foundational principle of choosing to rent your property.

Vermont already has some of the most progressive landlord-tenant laws in the country. By making it exceedingly difficult to remove tenants from a rental unit, even at the end of a signed lease, my fear is this bill will discourage property owners from renting to vulnerable prospective tenants, or to rent their units at all. Property owners will be less willing to take the risk of renting to individuals who are perceived to be greater risks, whether that's based on income level, past rental history, experience with homelessness or the criminal justice system, are being resettled from countries in distress or other factors. Instead, more preference will be given to renters with high credit scores, no criminal history, and positive references from previous landlords, creating further disparity for Vermonters. This will increase both costs and inequity in the housing market.

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If we want to help tenants find housing, we must build new and revitalized housing more quickly, support exemptions from permitting in designated areas, and stop making it more and more expensive to rent, own, build and live in Vermont.

For these reasons, I am returning this legislation without my signature pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip B. Scott". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "P" and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

PBS/kp