

# Opinion

NHREGISTER.COM • MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026 • PAGE A9

Wendy Metcalfe  
VP Content & Editor in Chief  
John Breunig  
Editorial Page Editor

## FORUM

# 'Just cause' housing bill is anything but just to apartment communities

By Morgan Miller

Last November, in a rare special session of the General Assembly, lawmakers passed a sweeping new law aimed at building safe, secure housing throughout the state for all income levels. In this year's regular session, which ends in May, housing providers are asking Gov. Ned Lamont and state lawmakers to work with us as the new law takes effect, and evaluate any new proposal this session with this lens: Will it support — and grow — safe, secure housing?

The legislature's Housing Committee failed that test in mid-March when it passed a twice-rejected bill that would remove the right to end a lease contract when its term is finished.

Consumers routinely rent or lease items with the understanding that the agreement they sign has a clear start and end date. Hotel rooms are rented for a set number of nights, rental cars are returned at the end of the reservation period, and leased vehicles are returned when the lease term concludes. Rental housing is no different. And sometimes when a lease's time lapses at the end, a housing provider may decide not to renew it — especially to preserve the basic need of an apartment's residents for a secure place to live.

This bill has been called the "just cause" bill, but there is no cause for a bill that will not protect Connecticut's apartment communities from disruptive neighbors, nor build one new apartment.

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In each of the past two years, the legislature has rejected this proposal, turning away from stoking conflict between residents and housing providers. If lawmakers want to be pro-tenant, they should not take away a little-used tool to keep apartments safe and secure.

Accountability in landlord-tenant relationships should be paramount.

There should be no such thing as an unreachable landlord, and beginning April 1, housing providers will have to provide a standardized rental terms summary form on every lease listing 24-hour contact information for the property

management. Our members are working hard to implement this requirement on time.

More housing makes Connecticut communities stronger, and Connecticut needs to make it easier to develop and build safe, secure multifamily housing that works for every budget.

We know each new session brings the opportunity to introduce new laws, so let's be sure to implement the reforms passed in November and work together to support long-term and sustainable responses to grow more housing in Connecticut. Let's focus on accountability, security, and growth.

On behalf of our members, who provide more than 73,000 apartment homes in Connecticut, the Connecticut Apartment Association will stay at the table at the State Capitol to help legislators craft long-term and sustainable responses to Connecticut's housing crisis.

*Morgan Miller, CAM, is director of Marketing, WinnResidential, and president of the Connecticut Apartment Association*