

Testimony in Support of HB 8108, HB 8109, HB 7764, HB 7765 – Affordable Housing and Renter Protections

House Judiciary Committee

March 18, 2026

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The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports Representative Potters' **HB 8108** and **HB 7764**, Representative Cruz's **HB 8109**, and Representative Stewart's **HB 7765**. These proposals will improve affordability for renters and add much needed protection for tenants.

Rhode Islanders value family, safety, and fairness. However, our state and local policies do not always reflect those values. While most people's salaries only increase by 1% or 2% a year on average, a study has found that, in 2023, the average rent in Providence increased by 7.5% - the highest jump in rent prices of any city in the country. In February 2025, a Redfin report named Providence, RI, the least affordable city for renters in the U.S.¹ **Representative Potter's HB 8108 would help address this affordability crisis by limiting annual rent increases to 4%**, helping to ensure that housing costs rise at a more predictable and manageable rate for residents. Property tax increases in Rhode Island are capped at 4% annually by law; why should homeowners be entitled to more protection than their renting counterparts? Our homes and neighborhoods set the stage for our lives. Housing instability affects almost every facet of our lives - including health, educational outcomes, economic mobility, and lifespan. Research shows that when people have access to affordable, stable, and high-quality housing, their quality of life improves – as does the condition of their communities.

According to Zillow, the average rent in Rhode Island as of March 2026 was over \$2,000, which is 10% higher than the national average.² These large increases in rent are happening at a time when most Rhode Islanders are already struggling to meet their basic needs. Every two years, EPI publishes a report called the RI Standard of Need. Our 2024 report found that 68% of all single adults and 78% of single parents with two children do not earn enough to meet their basic needs without assistance. These numbers are much worse for women and people of color. The same report found that in Rhode Island 83% of single Latino adults without children struggle to meet basic needs, as do 78% of Black Rhode Islanders, and 67% of Asian/Pacific Islander residents without children.

Black, Latino, and Asian Rhode Islanders make up the majority of residents in Providence. This means that not only are Rhode Islanders of color struggling to meet their basic needs at higher rates, but they are also disproportionately bearing the burden of these unfair rent increases across our state. Rent Stabilization is an equity issue; passing **HB 8108** will improve equity for all Rhode Islanders, especially historically marginalized communities.

¹ <https://www.redfin.com/news/rent-affordability-2025/>

² <https://www.zillow.com/rental-manager/market-trends/ri/>



Representative Cruz's HB 8109 would prevent landlords from evicting tenants without just cause and allow renters to renew their leases. Under this proposal, landlords would still be allowed to evict for specific reasons such as failure to pay rent or lease violations; however, eviction for non-payment would not be permitted if it is the result of an unreasonable rent increase. A study reviewing the impacts of just cause ordinances across California indicated that such policies can significantly reduce both evictions and eviction filings, underscoring the efficacy of such renter protections.³ As Rhode Islanders continue to struggle and cities like Providence see dramatic increases in rent, we have also seen an alarming increase in homelessness. The homeless population in RI increased by nearly 35% from 2023 to 2024 and has more than doubled since 2019.⁴ WJR reported in January 2025 that **Rhode Island has second highest percentage of chronic homelessness in the country.**

Research shows that evictions are a leading cause of rising homelessness rates across the country.⁵ When housing is lost, low-income renters often face significant barriers to securing new housing, such as past evictions that can hinder rental applications.⁶ Evictions are not only catastrophic events for families; they also affect entire neighborhoods. Evidence shows that evictions can perpetuate cycles of crime, poverty, and disinvestment. According to the Eviction Lab, properties owned by landlords with frequent eviction filings were shown to have higher rates of assault, burglary, robbery, and other violent crimes.⁷ Just cause policies not only help keep families housed, they also help keep our communities safe.

We also support **Representative Stewart's HB 7765, which would increase the required notification time for rent increases from 30 days to 60 days**, and for tenants ages 62 or older, the notice period is extended to 120 days. This extension also applies to termination of tenancy for month-to-month tenants. Given the volatility of the current housing market in Rhode Island, renters need more time to financially plan for their living situations. When renters have time to get more information by looking for comparable units and comparing rents, they have a much better sense of whether their rent increase is competitive or if it's best to secure new housing.⁸

Together, HB 8108, HB 8109, and HB 7765 provide a set of protections that make renting in Rhode Island more affordable while giving renters more stability, security, and peace of mind. Additionally, we support **Representative Potter's HB 7764, which would prohibit the use of algorithmic pricing** by landlords to determine the amount of rent to charge a residential tenant. By instituting an annual rent cap, ensuring just cause evictions and lease renewal rights, and requiring advance notice for rent increases, these bills help families better plan their futures,

³ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities#:~:text=This%20analysis%20of%20four%20California%20cities%20suggests,filling%20rates%20dropped%20by%200.780%20percentage%20points.>

⁴ WJR [Rhode Island has second highest percentage of chronic homelessness in country](#)

⁵ <https://homelesslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ProtectTenants2018.pdf>

⁶ [https://www.publicsource.org/eviction-collateral-impact-displacement-employment-transit-school-mental-health/#:~:text=\(Photo%20via%20Adobe%20Stock\),hurt%20a%20tenant's%20mental%20health.](https://www.publicsource.org/eviction-collateral-impact-displacement-employment-transit-school-mental-health/#:~:text=(Photo%20via%20Adobe%20Stock),hurt%20a%20tenant's%20mental%20health.)

⁷ <https://evictionlab.org/extractive-landlords-and-crime/>

⁸ https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/can-more-advanced-notice-rent-increases-stabilize-rents?utm_source=chatgpt.com



maintain stable housing, and avoid the devastating consequences of evictions. **We strongly urge the passage of all four bills.**