

Testimony in Support of SB-2271 & SB-2579 – Affordable Housing and Renter Protections

Senate Housing and Municipal Government Committee

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The Economic Progress Institute strongly supports **Senator Mack’s SB-2271** and **Senator Bissailon’s SB-2579**. 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 **Senator Mack’s SB-2271 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.³

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 **SB-2271** 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/>

³ https://economicprogressri.org/publications/2024_risn



We also support **Senator Bissailon's SB-2579, 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.⁴

Together, SB-2271 and SB-2579 will help families better plan their futures, maintain stable housing, and avoid the devastating consequences of evictions. **We strongly urge the passage.**

⁴ https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/can-more-advanced-notice-rent-increases-stabilize-rents?utm_source=chatgpt.com