

Testimony in Support of SB 212 – Just Cause Evictions

Senate Committee on Judiciary

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The Economic Progress Institute supports Senator Mack’s SB 212, which would provide much needed protection for renters by ensuring they cannot be evicted without just cause.

All Rhode Islanders deserve access to safe affordable housing. Unfortunately, since March 2020, Rhode Island has experienced over 16,000 eviction filings, exacerbating the state's homelessness crisis.¹ The lifting of the COVID-19 eviction moratorium led to a significant spike in eviction filings, with more than one-third of households being cost-burdened and over 20% of renters paying more than 50% of their income on housing. This has resulted in a 105% increase in the number of chronically homeless and unsheltered individuals in RI.² In 2023, Providence also experienced the highest average rent increase in the country. Rhode Islanders are struggling and need policies that protect renters. According to the EPI’s 2024 RI Standard of Need report, 68% of single adults and 78% of single parents with two children cannot afford to meet their basic needs, like rent and food, without assistance.³

This also presents a serious equity issue, as communities of color, especially women of color, are often most vulnerable to evictions. Despite 1 in 5 renters being Black, over half of all evictions are against Black renters across the nation.⁴ According to Eviction Lab, in Rhode Island Black and Latino renters face significantly higher eviction rates compared to their White counterparts. These disparities are worse when broken down by gender, and several studies have found that women of color are far more likely to be evicted than other demographics.

¹ <https://upriseri.com/eviction-labs-new-report-on-rhode-island-evictions-shows-alarming-trends/>

² <https://www.wpri.com/target-12/housing-crisis/ri-lawmakers-look-for-solutions-to-growing-homelessness-crisis/>

³ Economic Progress Institute. (2024). *Rhode Island Standard of Need*. Retrieved from [Economic Progress Institute](https://www.economicprogressri.org/standard-of-need).

⁴ <https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/with-evictions-on-the-rise-states-move-to-protect-tenants-rights#:~:text=and%20sexual%20assault.-%E2%80%9CEviction%20is%20associated%20with%20higher%20mortality%20and%20several%20disabling%20conditions,risk%20of%20coronary%20heart%20disease.%E2%80%9D&text=The%20Eviction%20Lab-,%20About%201%20in%202014%20renting%20households%20is%20threatened%20with%20evictions,receive%20eviction%20judgments%2C%20he%20says.>

SB 212 would help protect Rhode Islanders from the devastating consequences of eviction. We strongly urge passage.