



## CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

April 23, 2019

Chairwoman Prata  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

**Re: S0322 -- Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (Support)**

Dear Chairwoman Prata and Members of the Committee,

As Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Commission, I write to you today in full support of Senate Bill 0322.

Impaneled in 1963, the Providence Human Relations Commission works to protect and expand residents' rights to fair housing, education, employment, credit and public accommodations, free from discrimination. As it stands today, the mere filing of an eviction notice can result in the continuous denial of a tenant's rental application, even on grounds ultimately deemed retaliatory, discriminatory, or completely frivolous.

Over the years, the Providence Human Relations Commission has received multiple complaints in which a tenant has been wrongfully evicted due to discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, or country of ancestral origin, or on the basis of retaliation. Though conciliation, hearings and court cases can provide tenants relief, these processes are costly and slow, posing barriers that can be insurmountable for individuals who have done nothing wrong and have no protections as they go to apply for new housing opportunities. Landlords reviewing their applications can see eviction notices were filed against them, online. Rental application fees and expungements are also costly, and serve as an additional barrier where populations most vulnerable to exploitative eviction practices, poor housing stock, and lack of adequate legal defense – residents who are primarily veterans, low-income, families with children, of color, seniors, disabled, etc. – are driven into debt or homelessness.

Our current system punishes low-income tenants who are following the law. The sealing of court records for eviction cases that result in verdicts for the tenant wherein no appeals are taken is a meaningful and needed step in making our housing process more just, and I urge you to pass Senate Bill 0322 into law. I further encourage you to consider how this process can be made retroactive. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Sol Taubin  
Executive Director  
Providence Human Relations Commission