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To: Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Chair and
Members of the House Government Operations Committee

From: Angela Zaikowski, Director
Vermont Landlords Association

Date: May 13, 2021

RE: Burlington Charter Change (H.448) – Just Cause Evictions

Dear Representative Hanzas:

I am writing to regarding the Burlington Charter Change bill (H.448) and specifically section (2) related to Just Cause Evictions. I would urge the committee to delay action on this portion of the bill until testimony can be taken regarding this specific request.

This charter change request represents a significant departure from current state law regarding landlord-tenant process and practice. The state has been setting housing policy and implementing housing changes at a statewide level. Currently, the House is advancing a bill (S.79) which creates a statewide housing registry and inspection program. The state has been moving toward a unified and predictable statewide process. Burlington proposes to carve out and change this process, an action that should not occur without testimony at the state level.

Additionally, I would encourage this committee to seek input from the House General, Housing, and Military Affairs Committee and Rep. Tom Stevens. He and his committee have taken a lot of testimony recently on the challenges facing landlords and the rental community given the current global pandemic. The proposed charter change threatens to make a difficult situation untenable for many property owners. In the long run, the charter change could actually worsen, rather than improve, the housing situation in Burlington. For those reasons, this is an extremely controversial proposal and one that requires testimony and careful consideration by the Legislature.

Whenever you decide to take up this portion of H.448, whether tomorrow or next year, I would request an opportunity to testify before the Committee on this matter and would urge you to take the time necessary to consider the important policy issues raised by the bill.

Please let me know if there is additional information that you require. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



/s/ Angela N. Zaikowski
Angela N. Zaikowski
Director

CC: Rep. Tom Stevens