

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee, my name is Amy Arata and I represent House District 104, which includes New Gloucester and Gray. I am testifying in opposition to LD 1534

My husband and I have had a small housing business since 2007, with hundreds of happy customers. I take my responsibility to my tenants very seriously. You have probably heard from others that every city with rent control actually developed a worse housing shortage, and that having different eviction requirements for different towns will create confusion in the courts. I'm going to focus on my first-hand experience about the problem that so-called "just cause" evictions will cause for the vast majority of good, hard-working, honest tenants who are your constituents.

Imagine living on the other side of the wall from someone who is threatening and disruptive. You can't send your kids outside to play, you can't get any sleep at night because of the noise. Even though smoking is against the rules, the neighbor still smokes and your kids get asthma. You tell your landlord that you really don't want to move because you can't afford to and your kids want to stay in their school, but you can't continue to live this way. You're living in fear and your family deserves a safe apartment. Your landlord agrees and wants to evict the neighbor.

Currently, the landlord can give the disruptive and threatening tenant a 30-day notice to move. The landlord doesn't have to tell the threatening neighbor that it's because of complaints because that would put the good tenant in danger. Remember, the landlord can go home every night, but the good tenant must share a wall with a dangerous person.

With a so-called "just cause" eviction, the tenant will have to take a day off from work, get child care, and go to court. She'll have to face the scary neighbor and testify about what he has done, and then they both have to go back to the building that they share. She'll have to live on the other side of the wall from him for weeks while the eviction process continues. Even after the eviction is complete, he'll know exactly where she lives and she'll be in fear.

What's more likely to happen is that the good tenant will be too intimidated to testify in court and will have to move her family out, and the same thing will happen to the next family that moves into the building. Remember, the landlord can't go to court and testify about complaints because that would be hearsay. The eviction would be dismissed and the good tenant would be in danger because the threatening tenant would know that she complained.

Landlords make more money when tenants stay long-term. We don't want them to move. I rarely evict tenants, but when I do, I'd rather the threatening and disruptive tenant be mad at me instead of the neighbors. I don't want to put the other tenants at risk. I've had some scary experiences, including when I was threatened by a tenant who ended up in jail. This bill is well-intentioned, but by requiring "just cause" for evictions instead of a 30-day notice to end a business relationship, the legislature would be harming more people than helping. Please vote "ought NOT to pass". Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions.