

DATE: February 17, 2009  
TO: Joint Committee on Housing  
FROM: Janis D'Agostino & Acer Colt  
Gold Star Apartments, Hartford, CT  
RE: HB 5978 and HB5979

With nearly 100 rental units in the City of Hartford and many years of experience, we can say with certainty - **When the tenant chooses to fight the eviction - it is solely due to desire to not pay or move.** These aren't the roaring 20's anymore. No maniacal slum lord shows up on a rainy night and moves them out.

Exactly the opposite is true. Every tenant has numerous resources at this finger tips provided by City, Church, Tenant Advocates and quasi legal and Pro Bono Attorney services groups to protect his housing rights. In Hartford they have 311 to dial to report any instance of blight or neglect or trash on a front yard. They have the Fire Department and 911 to call every time a refrigerator is broken or a circuit breaker blows. The Landlord will be cited for any perceived "housing" violation, that they deem a safety hazard. We recently were on notice for a loose toilet -- from the Fire Department.

That is at the onset of the tenants' foray into the world of protection they receive. They have the utmost help and protection of all - The Housing and License Division. This is the group that monitors housing issues and demands remedy from landlords within 30 days. After a recent inspection (at the tenant's request), and subsequent citation, it was demanded that we replace 3 cracked ceramic floor tiles and replace a light bulb in a pantry. The Housing Inspector hadn't noticed the loose toilet bolt.

This was all from a tenant we are evicting for non-payment of rent. He is trying to build his case for reason not to pay. Why do I tell you all this? Many of you believe that all landlords are Slumlords and that tenant rights are being violated. Actually just the opposite is true, and it has come 360 degrees since the Roaring 20's.

It is true - it is the Landlords who are taking abuse by the system. If a renter had a serious reason to object to an eviction why shouldn't he be required to continue paying his rent?

The sad truth is, it is the dregs of our society and your city that choose to stop paying rent. It is the ne'er do wells, the drug users, the drunkards, the petty criminals, people too lazy to help themselves, that find out early on that they can contest the eviction for no reason at all. They know how to milk the system and live rent free for months.

Requiring decent, honest tenants to place the rental funds in escrow would ensure the justice was served for those who pay the bills.

It would ensure that proper housing could be provided to those who are part of a healthy society.

It would be a giant step in removing the invisible blight of a City. The blight caused by indifference, the blight caused by lack of responsibility to oneself and to a functioning society.

We ask for your support of these bills.