

Written Testimony In Support of Bill 5307

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the housing committee. My name is Stefan Wladyka of East Haven. Thank you for this opportunity to publicly testify regarding Bill Number 5307, An Act Requiring Landlords to Maintain Locks on Tenants' Windows.

I strongly support passage of Bill 5307 in order to protect tenants whose landlords do not maintain window locks from becoming victims of crimes such as burglary, home invasion, kidnapping, rape, and even murder.

While most landlords are responsible citizens who maintain their rental properties in safe and working order, Connecticut law already exists to regulate the behavior of those landlords who inevitably will not maintain their properties and choose to put their tenants' lives in danger. These laws are listed in Chapter 830, Section 47a-7 Landlord's Responsibilities, and include a landlord's responsibility to "make all repairs and do whatever is necessary to put and keep the premises in a fit and habitable condition." The law mentions maintenance of "electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating and other facilities," but makes no mention of security.

But what good is running water or heat if a tenant loses his or her life because of a violent crime? Citizens who rent dwellings shouldn't have to worry about predators easily slipping through their windows in order to carry out violent crimes, and reasonable people would agree that providing locking windows is a landlord's responsibility.

Landlords may express concern about the cost of checking for and/or installing window locking mechanisms in large apartment complexes or in geographically distributed properties. To these landlords I would say that window locks should have already been installed in working order on all windows, by virtue of moral responsibility alone.

Still other landlords may protest that they may incur liability should a tenant fail to lock a window on which there is a working lock and fall prey to a violent predator. To these landlords I would ask, is a landlord liable if a tenant fails to turn on his or her heat in the cold of winter and thus freezes to death? The answer should undoubtedly be no, as this would be out of the landlord's control.

Passage of Bill 5307 will give a 29-year-old woman who lives alone in a first-floor apartment peace of mind when she closes her eyes to sleep at night. Passage will mean that a single father who tells his two young children to lock the door when he's at work won't need to worry that a culprit could sneak in through a window and harm his children. Passage of this bill could very well save lives.

There should be no doubt that a landlord is responsible for maintaining locks on windows to protect tenants from violent criminals. The State of Connecticut should codify this responsibility into law to stand up for those tenants who cannot stand up to irresponsible landlords by themselves. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony this afternoon.