



**HOME BUILDERS & REMODELERS ASSOCIATION
OF CONNECTICUT, INC.**

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*Your Home
Is Our
Business*

**Housing Committee
Public Hearing
Testimony
02/18/2020**

To: Chairmen Rep. McGee, Sen. Anwar, Ranking Members Rep. Zullo, Sen. Hwang and distinguished Members of the Housing Committee

From: Jim Perras, CEO

Re: **HB 5118: AA Requiring Landlords to Provide Security Systems and Lighting in Rental Property Hallways**
HB 5123: AAC The Permitting and Safety of Rental Units
HB 5126: AAC Inspections of Rental Property Prior to Occupancy or Termination, Late Rental Payments and Designation of a Rental Housing Ombudsman

The Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut (HBRA-CT) is a professional trade association with nearly 900 hundred business members statewide, employing tens of thousands of Connecticut residents. Our association of small businesses is comprised of residential and commercial builders, land developers, remodelers, general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and those businesses and professionals that provide services to our diverse industry. We build between 70% to 80% of all new homes and apartments in Connecticut each year and engage in countless home remodeling projects.

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide **testimony in response to HB 5118, HB 5123 and HB 5126**. If enacted, **HB 5118** would require landlords to provide security systems and lighting in rental property hallways for the safety of tenants. The HBRA applauds proponents of this legislation for efforts to ensure tenant safety. The HBRA concurs that adequate lighting should be provided for and maintained to ensure to tenant safety. However, the HBRA has concerns with mandating a “security system” in all hallways of a premise having public access. As written, security system is not defined. Would it require cameras, alarms, motion sensors and/or third-party surveillance contracts? Would all apartments regardless of the number of units and whether it is owner occupied be subject to these provisions? The HBRA maintains that such a provision will be cost prohibitive. Its impacts will be regressive, as cost will likely be passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents affecting those that can least afford rent hikes the most. **The HBRA requests that references to “security systems” be removed from the bill.**

If enacted **HB 5123** would authorize building officials to request proof of a building permit for rental unit construction and impose a penalty for construction without a permit and to impose strict liability against rental property owners for dwellings containing toxic levels of lead.

The HBRA applauds efforts made by proponents of this bill to address lead poisoning and ensure proper abatement where lead is found. However, the HBRA opposes the use of strict liability as found in Sec. 4(d). As written “any person” would be held strictly liable for damages. The HBRA

takes the position that this casts too wide of a net that might encapsulate contractors who abate properties using established requirements and procedures. In addition, unless individuals are tested before, during and after abatement occurs there is no way to adequately ascertain if exposure to lead causing injury or death occurred in or outside the home. **HBRA asks that Sec. 4(d) be removed from the bill.**

If enacted **HB 5126** would permit tenants to request an inspection of rental property prior to occupancy and after notice of termination of a tenancy, to cap late fees for rental payments and to create a Rental Housing Ombudsman with the Department of Housing. The HBRA supports common sense protections for both tenants and landlords, such as the inspection requirements found in this bill. However, the HBRA would discourage one-size-fits-all approaches to late rental payments. Late rental payments should be designed to act as an effective deterrent to a tenant's non-compliance with contractual obligations. If set too low, a tenant can make a calculated decision to forego his or her contractual obligation without real repercussions. Many landlords work with thin margins and depend on predictable rental payments to cover mortgage payments on rental properties. If this provision were to pass, it could unintentionally increase late payments and subsequently defaults in mortgage obligations. **As such, the HBRA requests that Sec. 2 which pertains to late fees be removed from this bill.**

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide testimony on **HB 5118, HB 5123** and **HB 5126**.