

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Shaquille Corniffe. I am a resident of Hamden. I am testifying in support of a rent cap and in support of HB 6588, with changes to better protect tenants.

I've been a Hamden resident since 2017. In 2019, I moved to Seramonte Estates where I have lived until present. Over the course of time living at the residence of Seramonte Estates I have experienced a lot of emotional rollercoasters not only myself but also my mother.

The problems with our landlord began the first day we moved in. Upon the first day of going into the unit there was a strong smell of gas it smelled like if gas was leaking, and we call Seramonte informing them about the situation and instead of sending someone to address the problem they demanded that we call the gas company. Then when we turned on the central heater there was a strong smell of propane through the vents leading from the basement all the way up into the rooms – this incident triggered my mother's asthma and she ended up in the emergency room. In addition to these issues, there are so many ongoing structural problems in the building. Despite the numerous problems, they asked to raise our \$2000 rent by \$700.

We fought this rent increase at the Hamden Fair Rent Commission and only ended up having to pay \$250. Still, this increase has greatly impacted my life in a negative way. Because of the rent increase I have had to sacrifice more time to work in order to pay rent. Some weeks I have to work 7 days a week. This unsustainable schedule doesn't allow me enough time to rest and recoup, it has an effect on my body. Every month I worry about not being able to pay my rent. Particularly because if you aren't able to pay on time, the late fees are compounding. Also, not all towns have Fair Rent Commissions and even where there are, many people may not even be aware or do not have the time and energy it takes to go through with a hearing. A statewide rent cap is important to make sure all communities in the state have some stability.

Business don't care anything outside of the corporate world. Whoever is the property investor just wants to know they can make a profit, regardless of if it goes against anyone's rights, safety, or stability. After the Fair Rent Commission hearing, our property manager even made subtle comments to us as tactics to scare us into thinking they would kick us out for fighting for our basic needs. This is also why I also believe expansion of good cause protections is a necessary complement to a statewide rent cap – these protections ensure tenants can assert their rights without facing a retaliatory eviction that will force them from their homes and permanently damage their records.

The amount of money we pay in rent a month is equivalent to the amount many people spend on a mortgage. Just because we don't have a huge amount of money to put down at once on a house, we are subject to living in someone else's property. But, unlike people with mortgages, I do not have the luxury of predictable or stable payments.

I strongly support a rent cap, but HB 6588 would be stronger with the following changes:

- **The cap should be lower—I suggest 2.5 or 3%.** This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be affordable and predictable to tenants.
- **It should cover apartments in between tenants** so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent.
- **It should expand good cause eviction protections** to cover all tenants so they have greater stability in their homes.

Sincerely,
Shaquille Corniffe
Hamden