

Dear Mr. Speaker, Office of the Attorney General, and members of the committee,

In the matter regarding HB729, / cross filed with SB 530.

I am a landlord with ten units and have been for eleven years now. Your recent approach to raise eviction fees and the inability to collect these new fees from the tenants is very concerning. Any landlord with any experience will tell you that keeping good tenants is an absolute requirement in order to cover costs and make any profit. Lose of a tenant is a very costly event already, this is without an eviction of any sort. Turnover costs routinely cost five to nine months worth of rents. My goal from the beginning has been to keep tenants a minimum of 3 years, and hopefully far longer. Of my ten tenants, eight are the original tenants we placed in the properties. Only two of our units have ever turned over. In eleven years we have never had to evict a tenant. Even with non-paying tenants we have sought a solution that did not require eviction. But admittedly that may just be the way I have managed our business.

In these particularly trying times for everyone, tenants and landlords, we have sought to work closely with each of our tenants on a case by case basis. Twenty percent (2 tenants) are behind and have been since the impact of Covid. As Covid impacts started (March 2020) we immediately stopped collecting any late fees, prior to legislature action ceasing these fees. I sent out information of ways the tenants could get assistance in an attempt to help each tenant's situation.

Throughout this pandemic I have done my best to provide repairs, services, and keep tenants in place, each on a case by case basis. Despite the pandemic, I expect that each of our tenants will eventually be able to get caught up on their rents, and I will continue to work closely with them.

However, evictions are already a penalty to the landlord eating many months, if not a years worth of rent. The legislature should not be further penalizing the landlords by placing additional fees and limiting their ability to collect these fees from tenants. In these trying times we need to be encouraging Landlords and Tenants to work with each other to the best of their ability. However, if that fails, the eviction process is already costly to the landlord, takes several months of courts processing to get to the point of eviction. Adding insult to injury by additional fees just isn't the right thing to do.

If you really want to help these tenants, continue to work to find ways to help them pay their rent. Landlords have bills and costs to cover too and have every right to get paid the agreed upon rent from their tenants. Landlords are not using this as a time to profiteer off their tenants. They like everyone else, are just looking to survive this pandemic and hopefully get back to some sense of normalcy.

I count us very blessed with good tenants that have been willing to keep the channel of communications open, allowing us to work with them, within their means through this challenging time for all. I firmly believe we need to be looking for ways to help each other, encourage people to do the right thing, not looking for artificial ways to drive up costs and penalize each other.

I'll close with the realization that not all landlords are good, and neither are all tenants. But please, there are plenty of good landlords out there, trying to treat their tenants with respect, looking for ways to hold everything together for better times. If they need to go the eviction route, even bad landlords don't take it lightly. It is a huge cost already, no need to add to a bad situation to make it worse.

Sincerely,

Tim Porterfield
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