

Thank you Wesley. We will post your comments on our agenda when we next take up Just Cause evictions.

Best,
Joan

Joan Shannon
Burlington South District City Councilor
Cell: (802) 324-3300

Begin forwarded message:

From: wesley@tagur.com
Subject: re: no fault evictions
Date: October 7, 2020 at 11:20:14 AM EDT
To: Larry Miller <btvlandlords@gmail.com>, jshannon@burlingtonvt.gov

[WARNING]: External Message

Hello All,

I am writing in regards to "no fault evictions" being proposed in Burlington, VT. I have witnessed first hand as a landlord and previously as a tenant how a landlord's discretion to not renew a lease to a tenant can be advantageous to tenants and the personal safety of a building, neighborhood and community.

Domestic violence is a vastly under reported silent crime plaguing communities across the area. Statistics have shown that during this time reports are actually up. No fault evictions can and have been shown to partially alleviate this terrible situation. Often times tenants sign a lease as a couple and as often happens in romantic relationships there are fights and breakups. However, what is a tenant to do when they live with their abuser and are locked into a lease? Worse yet what is a tenant to do when they cannot afford to vacate a lease and the law requires the landlord to continue renting to a tenant indefinitely? Even worse yet what is a tenant to do when the lease expires but they can't afford to live alone and can't find a suitable roommate as they too are in a lease and the expiration dates don't align? They are effectively trapped, indefinitely.

As a landlord, I have witnessed this situation of a toxic relationship

whereas a tenant would text me about not renting to their partner again when their lease expires. Thankfully, this situation worked out as they were able to separate and move on, however, initially one wanted to stay for an additional six months. It was only after me intervening and pressuring one of them that I would not be renewing their lease that incentivized him to expedite the separation and move on. There are a litany of additional examples as well of the benefits of a no fault eviction when there is a bully in the building, or when a single tenant pays the months rent and a roommate(s) pay her back (very slowly if at all) this causes her great stress to which landlords also get the text messages asking for assistance and advice. Other examples include hygiene/medical issues and lack of respect for the consequences of these issues. As the saying goes, you don't really know someone until you live with them. Sometimes finding a roommate can be hard and timing is everything. If a tenant wants out of a lease to live with a more suitable companion no fault evictions can adjust the timing for two compatible people to cohabitate. If no fault evictions become verboten, it can often times exacerbate the situation putting not only the tenants safety in jeopardy but also that of the entire building and possibly neighborhood.

Tenants should have flexibility in who they choose to live with, not be locked into a lease with an abuser until the stars align when a trusted friends lease expires at the same time theirs does so they can move on to a safe environment. Landlords are an excellent resource for tenants to insure safety. As a landlord we just want responsible tenants who will respect roommates and all others in the building and when there's an issue our tenants usually come to us first for help/advice. A "no fault eviction" would never hold in a single family home for someone who was abusive or a bully or just was no longer a good fit for the family/group. They couldn't manipulate their way into staying in the home when they aren't wanted but have legal protections to stay. We are just asking that our tenants be given similar flexibility and not be trapped in a lease with someone dangerous until they acquire enough resources to move on. Also keep in mind sometimes an abuser will intentionally destroy property so that the security deposit refund will be less further complicating the cash flow for someone to move on forcing them to reconsider the expenses associated with moving.

Again, as landlords we can help, but if no fault evictions are enacted, our ability to do so will be diminished. Landlords least desirable outcome is an eviction. It is costly, time consuming and stressful! No one wants a healthy, clean, safe and most importantly reliable living situation more than a landlord.

Thank you!

Wesley Williams
North Champlain St

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