



**NYS Senate Committee on Housing, Construction,
and Community Development
Public Hearing on Rent Regulation and Tenant Protection Legislation**

May 22, 2019

Albany

**Testimony of Genevieve Rand,
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I would first like to thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Brad Hoylman, and Senate Housing Committee Chair Brian Kavanaugh for holding this hearing on the need for Good Cause legislation.

Right now, in New York State, there are 3 basic reasons someone can get legally evicted. First, is nonpayment of rent. Second, is a nuisance eviction — when somebody is harassing their neighbors or damaging the unit. Third, is no reason at all — otherwise known as no-cause. That's what we're aiming to address with this Good Cause bill. Since landlords don't have to prove they have a Good Cause to evict a tenant, every single landlord who wants to discriminate against a marginalized person, or who wants to maintain a climate of fearful tenants who accept regular violations

of their rights and dignities without protest, rushes to no-cause nonrenewal to get rid of anyone they feel is a problem for their power. Real estate can write up a no-cause nonrenewal and go to court and say “We don’t need a reason, we can evict whoever we want.” I think any honest landlord would agree that if they think they have a good reason, a Good Cause, to kick us out — it’s not asking too much to ask them to prove it! But without this law, they don’t have to. That isn’t right. It’s not how the law should work. The millions of people in New York who rent don’t deserve it — we deserve stability in our homes, and freedom from discrimination and tyranny.

I’m a case study here. I’ve never been offered a lease renewal in any apartment I’ve rented, and I’ve experienced homelessness and ongoing housing instability because of it. I’m a transgender woman — we’re around 8 times more likely to be evicted than everyone else, so it checks out. I’m also the type to stand up for my rights, because it’s hard enough even when they’re not being violated. I know for certain that people like me deserve a place to live. Where I’m living right now, if we don’t pass Good Cause, my landlords will probably file for nonrenewal eviction as soon as the moratorium is up — because even though I pay my rent and take care of the place, I’m here today, challenging their power. They want me gone. They non-renewed me, no cause. And I can’t count the number of people I personally know who are expecting the same knock on their doors. In the local campaigns being run across the state, there have been tenants who are afraid to even come to city meetings when the bill’s up for discussion, because their landlord goes to those meetings too and they’re scared they’ll get nonrenewed for standing up for themselves.

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg. Millions of people across New York tolerate faulty heating, pest infestations, lead, mold, plumbing failures, crumbling structures, harassment and privacy violations, and so much more, out of fear that they’ll lose their homes if they report. You’ve

already heard about a lot of this in the 2019 hearings on this bill — but here we are, in 2022, still begging for these common-sense protections against retaliation, discrimination, and arbitrary displacement.

The reason for the unusual level of persistence and unity among tenant groups on Good Cause is simple: every community organization in this field struggles daily with the lack of these protections. They watch discriminatory and retaliatory displacement tear up communities, ruin the lives of their neighbors — old, young, Black, white, brown, conservative, democrat, everyone has a community. Everyone has roots. Everyone has a place they want to stay, and shouldn't have to fear losing it if they assert their rights to safe, livable housing. And I've spoken about Good Cause individualistically so far, but what's really exciting to us about it — and what scares corporate real estate so badly — is that this bill represents the right for tenants to organize ourselves, and enforce our existing legal rights ourselves, together, without fear of nonrenewal and displacement.

You have an opportunity to do something big here. To the Democrats in this room, especially those in purple districts — you know that Republicans want nothing more than for your party to deliver nothing of substance it can campaign on. And you know that there are corporate Democrats in the pockets of big real estate who are more than happy to let that happen, to let the party fail to deliver for working-class New Yorkers, as long as the checks keep coming. We've seen what can happen in the event of mass disillusionment with the political system — so what I'm asking of those of you in this room today is to have the guts to do something. To pass Good Cause so that millions of renters around the entire state of New York, when it's time to renew their leases this year, or when a big developer wants to uproot their community, can see a night-and-day difference in their power and their stability in their homes and know, this is how my representatives work for me. Let's get it done. Thank you all again for listening.

