

Testimony submitted on behalf of the Coalition of Western New York Property Owners
Lisa Damiani, Executive Director
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The Coalition of WNY Property Owners which is a group of landlords who came together in February 2020 because they felt their voice was missing in the statewide dialog of housing policy. The members of this group provide multifamily housing and collectively represent more than 10,000 market rate and affordable units in Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua and Monroe counties.

When I examine policy matters, I start by asking the question - What is the problem that we are trying to solve and is the proposed solution hitting the appropriate target. In this case I would argue that it is not.

I have listened intently to the testimony today, done research, listened to the members of the WNY coalition – here is the bottom line – there are both good and bad tenants and good and bad landlords sweeping, overly broad policies often create more havoc or unintended consequences while trying to effect behaviors of a smaller group.

If passed and implemented the intended and unintended consequences of Good Cause will be numerous.

- It will be more difficult not easier for tenants to find places to live.
- The lack of movement will restrict the amount of housing units available
- Properties will be devalued – therefore municipalities will see a decrease in tax receipts.
- The local owners who can't sustain further control and downward pressure will put properties up for sale – as we all know owners who live in the community have a vested interest in the maintenance and upkeep of their properties & are best for communities and tenants
- The quality and growth of housing stock will be strangled.
- The court system will be more overwhelmed than it is now if nearly every lease termination needs to be adjudicated.
- Investment in property will be less appealing – especially in cities like Buffalo and Rochester
- Good Cause eviction will promote an adversarial relationship between the landlord/tenant.

The tenant landlord relationship is mutually beneficial - it is a huge negative when the two parties are at odds. Tenants need a place to live, and the landlords need tenants to occupy their units, eviction is in no one's best interest.

I would urge that we look at alternatives to achieve the desired goal.

- Providing more direct assistance to low- income tenants – not artificially controlling prices of all units.
- A right to counsel, which does exist in the City of Buffalo, leads to many resolutions other than eviction.
- Also, in the City of Buffalo warrants are not immediately issued allowing both parties time to settle or make other arrangements.
- Setting standards and uniformity in court operations – this was an item that was illuminated by the pandemic. Some courts were opened, functioning and hearing cases others were shut down basically rendered immobile.

- In WNY a hub court is being instituted for the municipalities outside the City of Buffalo to consolidate cases - one court, hearing the same types of cases will be more efficient and equitable.
- In Rochester there is a specific Court to deal with code violations again to streamline and consolidate.

As a person with a background in Math I think of the relationship between tenants and landlords as an equation. Two sides should be balanced – Good Cause will create a greater imbalance.

Thank you for the opportunity.