

PHILIP B. SCOTT
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 3, 2022

The Honorable BetsyAnn Wrask
Clerk of the Vermont House of Representatives
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Ms. Wrask:

Pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution, I am returning H.708, *An Act Relating to Approval of Amendments to the Charter of the City of Burlington*, without my signature.

Investing in housing has been and continues to be a top priority of my Administration. The lack of housing working Vermonters can afford is a significant challenge that contributes to our crisis of affordability and impairs our ability to keep and attract the families we need to revitalize our communities.

In addition to supporting investments and policies that will address Vermont's housing affordability crisis, we must not add policies that will remove much-needed housing units from the market. By eliminating a property owner's ability to end a lease agreement at the time of the mutually agreed upon end date within a lease, this "just cause eviction" law effectively creates the potential for perpetual tenancy, undermining private property rights and a foundational principle of choosing to rent your property.

Vermont already has some of the most progressive landlord-tenant laws in the country. By making it exceedingly difficult to remove tenants from a rental unit, even at the end of a signed lease, my fear is this bill will discourage property owners from renting to vulnerable prospective tenants, or to rent their units at all. Property owners will be less willing to take the risk of renting to individuals who are perceived to be greater risks, whether that's based on income level, past rental history, experience with homelessness or the criminal justice system, are being resettled from countries in distress or other factors. Instead, more preference will be given to renters with high credit scores, no criminal history, and positive references from previous landlords, creating further disparity for Vermonters. This will increase both costs and inequity in the housing market.

The Honorable Betsy Ann Wrask

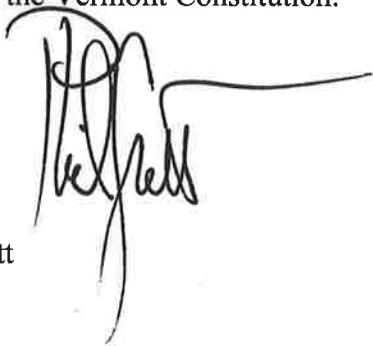
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If we want to help tenants find housing, we must build new and revitalized housing more quickly, support exemptions from permitting in designated areas, and stop making it more and more expensive to rent, own, build and live in Vermont.

For these reasons, I am returning this legislation without my signature pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip B. Scott". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "P" and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

PBS/kp