



5700 Broadway Avenue, Cleveland Ohio 44127, Phone 216-432-0617

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Honorable Chairperson and Members of the House Financial Institutions, Housing and Urban Development Committee,

My name is Gary Katz, and I am the Executive Director for Cleveland Tenants Organization (CTO). I am writing today to express my concern(s) and opposition to House Bill 282. While we appreciate a landlord's interest in protecting their investment(s) this proposed bill is not an appropriate response and potentially hurts many more people than it helps. Beyond that the proposed bill confuses the issue further because it potentially muddies existing federal, state and local laws and ordinances already on the books to address these civil concerns.

Prior to my time here at CTO, I served for 11 years as the Mediator for Cleveland's Municipal Court, Housing Division under the direction of the Late Honorable Judge Raymond L. Pianka. In January of this year i left the court after conducting nearly 10,000 mediations at a 90 percent success rate. The majority of people who I assisted in court and who will be the most adversely impacted by House Bill 282 are low to moderate income folks. Many of these people are disabled and many are victims of some form of domestic violence. So unfortunately the people who are struggling the most will be disproportionately affected. House Bill 282 will make it even harder for people as they try to find safe and affordable rental property. This ultimately leads to greater instability in the housing market and an increase in homelessness.

Each person has a story to tell and sometimes things in life are not black and white. Looking at a person's background is only one narrow tool. It doesn't really tell you who they are, where they came from, what happened to them and what they are doing to try and improve themselves. This bill casts a wide net on tenants and doesn't speak to landlords who sometimes create problems either through their negligence in making required repairs to property or even worse, are absentee.

House Bill 282 also raises legitimate federal preemption issues and the ability of a state to control who qualifies for federal housing assistance. There are also fair housing and civil rights concerns. Again the potential for there to be a disparate effect on those people already in protected classes under current federal and state fair housing laws is very real. CTO appreciates your consideration as we write to oppose House Bill 282.

Very Respectfully,

Gary Katz

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Katz".

Executive Director

Cleveland Tenants Organization

5700 Broadway Ave.

Cleveland, OH 44127

P: (216) 432-0617, Email: [gkatz@clevelandtenants.org](mailto:gkatz@clevelandtenants.org)