

March 3, 2021

Dear Reps. McGee and Smith, Sens. Lopes and Anwar, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Zenida Gonzalez. I am a resident of Bridgeport; I am testifying in support of Connecticut H.B. 6531 - An Act Concerning the Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings and H.B. 6528 - An Act Concerning the Sealing of Eviction Records.

I am a resident of P.T. Barnum Apartments, managed under the Bridgeport Housing Authority. As a resident, I have the opportunity to adjust my rent according to my income but the housing authority also has the right to adjust my rent and sometimes without clear communication. Three years into living here housing had changed my rent without me noticing. I received a Notice to Quit over a \$7 difference, but I was able to pay the difference and sort it out with housing. If, however, I was unable to pay the balance, or remained unaware of the change, I would have been sent to court and ended up with over \$400 in court fees over a \$7 rent adjustment. I am supporting this bill because I know there are others who have been caught unawares and with the aid of counsel could have resolved the issue without incurring these massive fees.

- In Connecticut, over 80% of landlords have legal representation in evictions, while less than 7% of tenants do.
  - Most tenants who want or need legal assistance cannot get it.
  - Free legal help is extremely limited, and private attorneys charge more than most tenants can afford.
  - Landlord-tenant laws and the eviction process already heavily favor landlords-it is easy to evict tenants, and hard for tenants to defend themselves. Housing law is technical and complex. Tenants are even further disadvantaged if they don't have a lawyer.

I strongly support H.B. 6531 and H.B. 6528 and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the Housing Committee.

Sincerely,

Zenida Gonzalez  
Bridgeport