

Your Rep & Senator Both Want to Hear from You on HD.5166

Legislators depend on a connection with their constituents to get reelected. If they aren't aware of what's good and bad, they will make bad choices. **You may be the only person who is calling them about an issue.** Every voice matters.

1a. Find your Rep and Senator

<https://malegislature.gov/search/findmylegislator>

First find and call the rep and senator where you live. If you have time, also call where each property you own is located.

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/HD5166>

Click the bill link to see if your Rep and Senator sponsored the bill.

1b. Recommendation: print this page

Prepare to have the conversation in a flexible order; draw a line down the margin to cross off points you have made. The line break shows what you still have to say, double the line or print new pages for each separate call:

- | 1. point made
- 2. not yet made
- | 3. another point already made

2. Call and Start by Asking Permission to Share Your Viewpoint:

You probably will be put through to the legislator's aide. This is OK. The aide will tell the legislator what you said. Adjust these to reflect reality:

1. "I'm a MassLandlords member/participant..." or "I'm a landlord..." "...living/working in your district."
2. "I'm _____ (insert your own adjective but do not swear: concerned; outraged; incandescent with rage) about HD.5166 An Act to guarantee housing stability during the COVID-19 emergency and recovery. Can I tell you about it?" (listen for their response; if it's a bad time, schedule a call back.)

3. Acknowledge their Current Position:

If they sponsored: "This is something you have cosponsored. I'm asking you to reconsider."
If they did not sponsor: "Please I'm asking you to oppose this legislation."
Always: "I have 5 reasons why this bill is ruinous."

4. Share Five Official Talking Points.

1. Say "One:" This bill would cancel my rents. Not postpone them, **cancel them**, until Aug 2021 *at the earliest*.
 - a. There is nothing that requires tenants to pay rent during the emergency.
 - b. It specifically removes my ability to recover rent in court or by mediated agreement afterwards.
 - c. In order to collect rent, I would have to prove they can pay.
 - d. This is impossible. I'm not a private detective! I don't have access to their bank accounts!
 - e. COVID-19 is a public health emergency. The public should pay, not housing providers.
 - f. Say, "that's one."
2. Say "Two:" The only cost reduction for housing providers is six to 12 months of foreclosure moratorium, depending.
 - a. It only applies to owner-occupied properties.
 - b. Rule of thumb, the mortgage is only half the cost of operating: I still have to pay real estate taxes, insurance, repairs, keep the place up to code, pay for extermination, mowing, utilities, etc.

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- c. How can I pay for all this with no rent?
 - d. If I take the mortgage forbearance, I have to give up rent even if I can prove the tenant can pay!
 - e. Say, “that’s two.” (Keep it moving.)
3. Say “Three:” There is no public funding in the bill.
 - a. Keeping people housed is necessary for the public interest. The public should pay, not put it all on me.
 - b. There’s a placeholder, but there’s no mechanism to generate funding.
 - c. Whatever funding may appear would apply to small landlords (leaving out half the housing) and nonprofits (who pay no tax).
 4. Say “Four:” The bill creates “just cause eviction rent control”
 - a. Raising the rent will be illegal and punishable even if my rents are already below market, and I didn’t raise them because of COVID-19.
 - b. Renovation will be illegal. Sometimes buildings need to be sold vacant or tenancies need to be terminated to gut the building, repair major structural defects, eliminate dangerous plumbing and electrical nonconformances.
 5. Say “Five:” The bill creates eviction sealing.
 - a. There’s already a process for the courts to seal someone’s record.
 - b. Eviction records are relevant for landlords to see. We have an obligation to our current renters to welcome new residents who will be respectful, equally contributing residents.
 - c. We’re in danger of having secret courts in Massachusetts. You probably didn’t notice, but the Boston Globe sued the Supreme Judicial Court for access to show-cause hearings, and they lost. If we can’t see what happens in the courts, we pave the way for corruption and bribery.

5. Share your Personal Story

Example: “So that’s my five points, let me just add: I’ve been in business 12 years. I run a good property. This bill will ruin me. I’ll sell out to condo converters or a slumlord, I don’t care who buys, I can’t operate free housing for years.”

6. Listen. Talk. Finally ask, “I’d Like to Ask You to Support our Alternative:”

“A Fair and Equal Housing Guarantee via Surety Bonds does everything anyone could want, no one will get evicted, but it won’t bankrupt me or the Commonwealth. The bill isn’t filed, but the text is online, anyone could be first to file it:”

Recommend they “Google ‘MassLandlords Fair and Equal Housing Guarantee,’ or get an email, share our link:

<https://masslandlords.net/policy/fair-and-equal-housing-guarantee-via-surety-bonds/>

“I’ve taken enough of your time, but in a nutshell, it’s just a guarantee of rental housing paid out of future tax revenue. And it was created with lots of input from landlords and renters, which is the way housing policy should be.”

“Please oppose/reconsider your sponsorship of HD.5166. Thank you.”

7. Fill out our Response Form: <https://masslandlords.net/grassroots>

8. Forward these talking points

You probably know a housing provider who hasn’t been paying attention. Now is the time to get them to pay attention.

9. Contact the Housing Chairs etc.

Due to the lack of formal hearings during the COVID-19, it is important if you still have energy to also call or email at least the chair and vice-chair on both the house and senate side of the Joint Committee on Housing. Note that anger or hostile communications with the committee will hurt our cause. Please be careful. Only take this step if you still have energy to both call and be restrained:

- [List of Housing Committee Members](#)

“The rights of a silent minority will be voted away by the majority every single time.”

Dos and Don'ts for Talking with Reps and Senators

DO

- Stick mostly or entirely to the talking points prepared by MassLandlords.
- Allow the Rep or Senator to start by inviting you to share what's on your mind.
- Learn what the Rep or Senator is interested in, and which committees they're assigned to.
- Present the need for change. Use MassLandlords data or case stories you know well (or your own experience).
- Relate the problem to someone or some place in their home district.
- Ask their position and why.
- Be even-handed when discussing judges or other public officials. You may not like these people, but the rep or senator may.
- If we know their record, ask why they voted a certain way.
- If you don't know the answer to their question, say "I don't know" and offer to have MassLandlords follow up. We will.
- Talk to Reps and Senators who are not on the "landlord side;" you can lessen their opposition or change it to in-favor. Once they see that we want what's best for everyone, they can easily come over to our side.
- Get to know the staff, their names and backgrounds.
- Thank them for helping us in the past, if they have.
- Leave them with a clear understanding of what you wanted.
- Leave them looking forward to their next meeting with MassLandlords.

DON'T

- Don't bring up too many issues.
- Don't bring up issues unrelated to MassLandlords. You can arrange a separate meeting to talk about your own agenda or the agenda of other groups.
- Don't threaten, pressure, beg, or attack.
- Don't raise your voice or do anything else to put them on the defensive.
- Don't overstate the case or repeat yourself.
- Don't expect them to understand anything about rental properties. Don't jump right into the explanation of the problem without setting the stage first.
- Don't be put off by smokescreens or dodging the question. Bring them back to the main point. Be in control politely.
- Don't promise things you can't. Never speak for the association.
- Don't be afraid to take a position for yourself.
- Don't shy away from meeting with Reps or Senators who are known to be pro-tenant.
- Don't be offended if you can only meet with staff.
- Don't be turned off by a staffer who looks young or inexperienced. They may be young, but they have the ear of their rep or senator.
- Don't leave them hoping never to encounter MassLandlords again.

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