

Your Rep & Senator Both Want to Hear from You on H.5018

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/H5018>

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2918>

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; angry) about H.5018 S.2918 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 6 reasons why this bill is ruinous."

4. Share Six Official Talking Points.

1. Say "One:" This bill is unnecessary. The CDC moratorium protects renters already.
 - a. The CDC moratorium lasts through December 2020 or longer, if extended.
 - b. It protects 100% of low- and moderate-income renters, 86% of all renters nationwide.
 - c. The state courts are going to enforce the CDC moratorium. They've already made the form for it.
 - d. Say, "that's one."
2. Say "Two:" This bill would create a moratorium that's too long.
 - a. It would last until one year *after* the state of emergency, which has no end date.
 - b. If the vaccine for COVID is mediocre, the state of emergency might last for years.
 - c. Federal judge Wolf said in *Baptiste v Kennealy*, September 25 that an eviction moratorium is unconstitutional if it runs too long. It might have to end *before* the COVID emergency does.
 - d. Say, "that's two."
3. Say "Three:" The primary payment for housing providers is a slow tax credit.

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- a. Tax credits aren't rent. I have bills to pay every month. Where will I get the money to do that?
 - b. The credit will take forever. Imagine I lose 100% of my rent for a year. That's like a 100% tax.
 - c. The tax credit refunds my MA income tax. That's like a 5% per year refund.
 - d. 100 divided by 5 is 20. It would take a landlord with one unit twenty years to get repaid.
 - e. Since businesses only pay tax on net income, my actual tax is 5% of a smaller number. It would take me forever to be repaid.
 - f. I won't even qualify for the tax credit if my renter gets RAFT. It's not that my credit will be reduced, I'll be fully ineligible, even if RAFT didn't cover full rent.
 - g. Say, "that's three." (Keep it moving.)
4. Say "Four:" There is mortgage forbearance, but the math doesn't work here either.
 - a. My mortgage represents half of my expenses each month.
 - b. If I accept the mortgage forbearance, I have to forgive rent for that month.
 - c. That means each month of forbearance I take, I lose twice as much in rent.
 5. Say "Five:" The bill is a partisan wish list of proposals that have nothing to do with COVID.
 - a. The bill would seal all court records related to eviction. Landlords wouldn't be able to screen renters, the courts would become open to bribery and corruption, and journalists would have to be licensed.
 - b. The bill would enact rent control. We tried this in MA, it failed. It made renovation illegal, had a disparate impact on people of color, and reduced our housing supply. We need much more housing.
 - c. The bill would enact just cause eviction. This makes it impossible to evict renters so criminally bad a landlord can't get anyone to testify against them.
 6. Say "Six:" The Governor has announced funding and help.
 - a. On Monday we allocated another \$171 million for housing.
 - b. When the CDC moratorium expires next year, we can allocate more if we still need it.

5. Share your Personal Story

Example: "So that's my six 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 H.5018 S.2918. 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. There are no chairs to contact

This bill has already been voted "ought to pass" and is headed for a floor vote. Your Rep and Senator are the most important people you can talk to.

"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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