

Dear Health, Insurance, & Environment Committee Members:

The undersigned organizations are writing this letter to express our strong support for HB18-1397. Like most states, Colorado has a Warranty of Habitability statute that regulates responsibilities between landlords and tenants around maintenance issues. Yet Colorado's statute heavily favors landlords and, as a result, fails to adequately protect Colorado's growing renter population. Due to this imbalance, tenants across the state are dealing with severe maintenance issues for prolonged periods of time, such as mold, plumbing failures, weeks without heat, etc.

Poor housing conditions such as these can have severe health implications. Poor housing conditions are associated with respiratory infections, asthma, and poor mental health and children's health is especially vulnerable to poor housing conditions. In addition, the imbalance between landlords and tenants impacts housing stability, which also harms health. Finally, unsafe and unstable housing conditions exacerbate health inequities by disproportionately impacting people working in low-wage jobs, communities of color, children, people living with disabilities and seniors.

HB 18-1397 will address challenges with current statute and help to even the playing field for tenants - both inside and outside of court. Key provisions of the bill include:

- 1) Making it easier for residents to enforce the statute outside of court through the right to withhold rent and the right to break a lease when conditions make the unit uninhabitable.
- 2) Add "mold" as a condition that could deem a unit "uninhabitable," as it is not in current statute and has proven to be a major hazardous health issue for renters.
- 3) Eliminate a presumption in favor of the landlord when it comes to retaliation. Currently, if a landlord evicts a tenant, increases rent, or acts in any retaliatory manner after a tenant voices a complaint or tries to enforce their rights, the presumption is the landlord acted "in good faith." Colorado is the only state in the country that has this presumption in favor of the landlord - most are neutral or actually favor the tenant.

Renters are paying exorbitant amounts towards rent and rental costs only getting higher and higher. In addition to being a consumer protection issue, we believe that every Coloradan deserves to live in a safe and healthy home. Colorado is facing a severe housing crisis and we need state action now more than ever. Please stand up for renters rights and VOTE YES on HB18-1397!

Sincerely,

Center for Health Progress
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Cross Disability Coalition

Colorado Fiscal Institute
Tri-County Health Network
Together Colorado
United for a New Economic