

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Trina Griego and I am with The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado. Thank you for allowing me to share words of support for SB25-020 Tenant and Landlord Law Enforcement. The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado promotes justice, religious liberty, and interfaith understanding through building relationships in order to educate, advocate, and catalyze social change. We have over 400 congregations in our statewide network, representing more than two dozen faith traditions.

I am here today with a personal story about the importance of this bill. In July of 2024 I had to move quickly and chose a place from a private landlord primarily for the location. The first red flag occurred when she told me she did not accept the rental screening report. Next, it became apparent that the floors were not up to code and deteriorating rapidly. She had no intention of fixing them. She pressured me to pay a utility bill in her name immediately without seeing the full bill every month. She pressured me to sign a lease addendum to reflect this. She gave out my private information to random people she hired without my knowledge or consent and saw no issue with this.

At the time I lived there I discovered she did not appear to have a valid landlord license. She never gave me the tenant bill of rights as required by Denver law, and the final straw came when I discovered an unsecured door within my apartment that other people had access to. When I reminded her that this is an issue of the warrant of habitability she downplayed the issue and then began a campaign of harassment to try and evict me and suggested lease termination any time I brought up an issue as means of intimidation.

Many of the laws I just mentioned that were violated, I have engaged with directly through this governing body. I knew these were violations, I reported what I could and I knew where to seek help, but I simply couldn't afford it. I had to make a choice to hold my landlord accountable or to use my limited resources to move out of a toxic and unsafe living situation. I finally accepted her lease termination and moved out at the end of September. She kept the entirety of my security deposit because I didn't provide enough notice to move out.

Knowledge of the legal system is not access to the legal system, and many landlords know this and count on the uneven standing of this relationship. I understand my situation would not rise to the level of AG involvement however it illustrates that this is an issue at every level of the industry and accessibility to relief is still a barrier. As rents rise, whether through artificial manipulation or otherwise, resources for action diminish and we are forced to make a decision in a crisis.

In that crisis I relied on and am thankful for my community for providing a means of support and a way out of an impossible situation. For many, that community is their faith community. Once again faith institutions are expected to bear the brunt of completely avoidable issues and step up to help because that is what they are called to do. They are forced to triage an emergency that should have never occurred which places them into a state of constant crisis management. This is not a sustainable or acceptable way to live for our renters, our families or our faith communities who seek stability and longevity to fulfill their personal and faithful missions in order to thrive. With that I ask this body to vote yes to ensure the pursuit of justice for renters in our state.