

April 2nd, 2024

RE In SUPPORT of SB24-094 Safe Housing for Residential Tenants

Mx. Chair, Members of the committee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB24-094. 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 faith families in our network across the state, and our network represents more than 2 dozen faith traditions.

Faith communities are often at the forefront of tackling matters of community need and concern, and housing has become a priority for many of our members. Interfaith has long worked alongside congregations to help them meet housing needs in their communities, including launching programs like the Safe Outdoor Spaces, the Congregation Land Campaign, and the Housing Equity Campaign. We work continuously with our congregations and various community partners to eliminate barriers to housing for all Coloradans.

I have also experienced unfortunate issues related to my health and living conditions. In the summer of 2011 my partner and I were in college and he moved into his first apartment across from the Governor's Mansion. Almost immediately, we discovered that it was infested with bed bugs. I was the one allergic to them and was in serious pain and discomfort for weeks, however the psychological toll was much worse. The landlord denied there was a problem and when it became too great to ignore, he blamed us. One woman moving out of the apartment building disclosed that she had become anemic as a result of the infestation. It quickly became evident that the landlord had no intention of remediating the issue. He instead threatened a 20 year old kid with lawsuits and financial ruin. We had to hire a lawyer just to be able to move out of these uninhabitable living conditions and after being out thousands of dollars and almost everything he owned, the landlord finally allowed him to move out without further financial damage. The landlord knew there was a problem and he also knew his chances of getting away with it were pretty good. Landlords are counting on tenants not having the financial resources to hold them accountable. Situations like this are exactly why SB24-094 is needed.

We need clear guidelines and policies to ensure people can live happy and healthy lives within their homes. The affordable housing crisis is still ongoing and had this incident happened now, I'm not sure we would have any other option than to stay. While we often have conversations about affordable and accessible housing, issues of healthy, inhabitable and safe housing conditions are no less important. I urge you to vote yes on SB24-094 to improve the living conditions of Coloradans. Thank you.