

NH Coalition to End Homelessness

January 26, 2026

Representative Joe Alexander
House Housing Committee
One Granite Place, Room 231
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairman Alexander and Honorable Members of the House Housing Committee:

My name is Jennifer Chisholm, and I am the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness (NHCEH). On behalf of NHCEH, I am writing in opposition to HB 1336, relative to exceptions to the cap on residential security deposits.

NHCEH understands that, for all landlords, managing risk is an important and prudent piece of their business operations. However, this reality does not negate the critical need for NH residents to have reasonable and affordable access to safe and stable housing. In the current New Hampshire rental market, allowing higher security deposits for applicants who do not meet standard screening criteria would raise upfront barriers in ways that are misaligned with economic reality and would further limit access for NH residents already struggling to secure housing. NHCEH is concerned that HB 1336 would unintentionally increase NH's homelessness rates and further extend the amount of time that individuals and families experience homelessness.

New Hampshire's rental market is defined by both high costs and limited availability. New Hampshire Housing's *2024 Residential Rental Cost Survey Report* shows a serious discrepancy between NH rents and wages. The median gross rent for a two-bedroom apartment in NH in 2024 was \$1,833 per month, a 37% increase since 2019. To afford that rent without being cost-burdened, a household would need to earn approximately \$73,300 per year, yet, in 2024 the median renter household income in NH was only \$56,814. In NH, 49% of renter households are cost-burdened, already spending more than 30% of their income on housing. For NH households earning less than \$35,000/year, 21% pay 30-50% of their income to rent, while an additional 55% are severely cost burdened, paying more than half their monthly income to housing expenses. This means that if HB 1336 were to pass, landlords would be able to demand three months' rent upfront from at least 76% of NH's low-income households, as their gross income would be less than three times the monthly rent.

Equally important is the issue of access to savings. According to the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute, nearly one in four New Hampshire households lacks \$2,000 in savings for emergencies, and the organization has described housing costs as "the defining pressure point" in the state's cost-of-living crisis. Requiring a security deposit equal to two months' rent raises the up-front cost families must save to move into a median two-bedroom unit to a staggering \$5,499. This creates a barrier that many households simply cannot clear, making stable housing even more unaffordable at a time when affordability must be our focus for NH families.

A Summary of NH's Rental Market and Wage Challenges

- From 2019 -2024, NH's median gross rents increased 36.1%, from \$1,347 to \$1,833 – an extra \$5,832 per year.
- In 2024, a household needed to earn \$73,300/year to afford the median rent of a two-bedroom apartment in NH; the median NH renter household made only \$56,814 – almost \$16,500/year short.
- In 2024, median-income households could afford the gross rent of only 13% of the 2 BR rental units on the market.
- According to the MIT Livable Wage Calculator, in 2024, a NH family made up of two adults and two children would have to earn \$129,768/year – the equivalent of \$62.38/hour in a full-time position – just to meet their basic needs. This calculation does not include 'extraneous' expenses such as retirement savings, paying off student or other loans, or buying holiday gifts for the children.
 - This is \$41.07 less per hour than the median NH renter household earns.

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The strain of the proposed increases would not be felt solely by renting households; NH entities that provide security deposit assistance would be affected, as well. Organizations such as local welfare, non-profit organizations, and faith communities are already struggling to meet NH's existing need for security deposit assistance with limited resources. This is a very real issue across the state. In fact, just last month, NHCEH helped convene 19 individuals representing 10 human service agencies from all over the Granite State to talk about the challenges organizations currently face in helping households secure one month's rent to cover their security deposits as resources across the state have dwindled, and to discuss potential solutions. HB 1336 would make the work of this group even more difficult at a time where NH 211 received over 1,000 calls in 2025 from NH residents requesting security deposit assistance.

HB 1336 would allow higher security deposits for applicants whose credit scores fall below a landlord's stated threshold, whose income does not meet minimum income-to-rent requirements, or who lack prior rental history or landlord references. While intended as a risk-management tool, this approach requires households with fewer financial resources to demonstrate greater cash on hand, transferring financial risk on to renters least able to absorb higher upfront costs. This creates a double-edged dynamic: households that already face barriers to credit or stable housing are then asked to provide higher upfront payments, further limiting their ability to stabilize and improve their financial standing.

NHCEH strongly believes that policies should balance legitimate business considerations with the economic realities facing renters. In today's market, doubling security deposits does not create a fairer or more functional rental system; it raises upfront barriers in an already unaffordable environment and further narrows access to housing.

For these reasons, NHCEH respectfully urges the Committee to oppose HB 1336. We welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource as you consider policies that address New Hampshire's housing challenges while preserving access and stability for renters. If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at jchisholm@nhceh.org.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,



Jennifer Chisholm, LICSW, MLADC
Executive Director
NH Coalition to End Homelessness

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HB 1336 (2026) — Key Talking Points

Relative to Exceptions to the Cap on Residential Security Deposits

Bill Summary

- Allows landlords to require up to two months of rent as a security deposit
- Applies when applicants do not meet credit, income-to-rent, or rental history criteria

Position

- NHCEH opposes HB 1336
- Understand landlords need to have the ability to manage risk
- Core concern: access to housing in an already unaffordable market when so many NH families that rent are already cost burdened or severely cost burdened

Market Reality

- Rents are high and housing supply is tight
- Median 2BR rent: \$1,833/month (up ~37% since 2019)
- Median renter income: \$56,814
- Income needed to afford median rent: \$73,300
- Gap is just shy of \$16,500/year or \$1,375/month
- Nearly half of renters are cost-burdened
- 76% of NH's low-income renters are cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened

The Challenge

- Nearly 1 in 4 NH households lacks \$2,000 in savings
- Two-month deposit = ~\$3,600 upfront
- For many renters, especially those with weaker credit or no rental history, that money does not exist

Core Policy Issue

- Bill targets applicants with:
 - Lower credit
 - Income below rent multiples
 - No rental history or references
- These groups are least likely to have cash on hand
- Policy asks people with fewer resources to provide more upfront cash
- This is risk transfer, not risk reduction
- **WILL PLACE AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN ON NH's safety network** – local welfare, nonprofits, faith communities, who are already struggling to support the security deposit assistance need across the state with their limited resources

Issues with Proposed Guardrails

- In a supply-constrained market:
 - Landlords already have leverage
 - "Optional" higher deposits can start to become a standard condition of lease approval
- Effect: higher price of entry for renters
- No impact on housing supply or affordability

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In Summary

- Doubling security deposits raises housing barriers
- Makes access harder in an already unaffordable market
- Does not solve the housing problem
- NHCEH urges the Committee to oppose HB 1336