

NH Coalition to End Homelessness

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

January 19, 2026

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

My name is Jennifer Chisholm, and I am the Executive Director of the NH Coalition to End Homelessness (NHCEH). On behalf of NHCEH, I present this testimony regarding HB 1598, relative to notice for tenants and landlords engaged in eviction processes. NHCEH is in opposition to this bill and the significant negative impacts it will have on NH renters.

In the 2025 Edition of NHCEH's *The State of Homelessness in NH*, the analysis of the Granite State's homelessness data and trends found that NH continues to see growth in the number of NH residents who have been homeless for 12 months or more. NH's 2024 Point in Time Count showed a 17% increase in chronically homeless residents – more than 50% higher than the national increase of 10%. The preliminary data for NH's 2025 PIT count shows an even higher jump of 30%, or an additional 188 individuals who were not able to exit homelessness within 12 months. NH is also experiencing an increase in the number of seniors experiencing homelessness. In fact, almost 1 out of every 4 NH residents who experienced homelessness for the first time in their lives in calendar year 2024 was aged 55 or older.

This increase in chronic and senior homelessness indicates that it is taking NH individuals and families longer and longer to restabilize after losing their housing, meaning that eviction prevention is an even more important strategy than ever. Looking at NH's older adult homeless numbers, it is likely that vulnerable Granite State seniors will continue to need significant eviction prevention support.

Instead of preventing evictions, HB 1598 would increase tenants' likelihood of losing their housing by decreasing the amount of time they have to address the issue with their landlord. The advanced timeline of HB 1598's proposed process would also effectively remove the tenant's ability to have legal representation at their hearing, as the hearing would be scheduled before a tenant could reasonably expect to engage with counsel. HB 1598 would also eliminate almost all defenses that could be raised by the tenant and prevent NH families from being able to appeal the court's decision by removing the 7-day delay in the issuance of the writ of possession that currently allows the tenant to begin the appeal process. These protections that are in place in NH offer tenants access to a just legal process. Removing such protections to expediate evictions will undoubtedly decrease tenants' ability to prevent their eviction.

As someone who spent over 20 years providing direct social work support to people experiencing homelessness in NH, I can attest that the human stories behind the noted homelessness data are real, heartbreaking, and more often than not, a result of broken systems and unworkable economic realities. Given the continuing housing crisis the state is facing, combined with a wage economy that has not kept up with living expenses, an ounce of prevention truly is worth ten pounds of cure when it comes to homelessness in NH and successfully helping families stabilize – not an easy task with all of the economic barriers they currently face.

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A Summary of NH's Rental Market and Wage Challenges

- According to NH Housing, the state's housing finance authority, the vacancy rate for two- bedroom rental units in NH in 2023 was 0.6%; in a healthy rental market, the vacancy rate would be at least 5%.
- From 2019 to 2024, statewide median gross rents have 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 – over \$16,000/year short.
- In 2024, median-income households could afford the gross rent of only 13% of the two-bedroom rental units on the market in the Granite State.
- Additionally, inflation of goods and services has also impacted families' ability to make ends meet, afford basic needs, and save for their futures. For example, according to NH Fiscal Policy Institute, in 2023, the average cost of childcare for NH families with two children under the age of five in daycare was \$32,000/year.

NHCEH strongly believes in the power of prevention, and that NH tenants are due the protections provided to them by the current eviction process. We hope you join us in opposing HB 1598 and vote against the negative impacts it would impose on NH renters.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. NHCEH's mission is to be a statewide partner in reversing the trends NH is experiencing in its homelessness rates and making safe, stable housing accessible to everyone. If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at jchisholm@nhceh.org.

Respectfully,



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