

Written Testimony for HB1442

My name is Gretchen Graf and I live in Grand Forks, ND.

I want to testify in favor of HB1442 which will cap the late fees a landlord can charge on unpaid rent at 8%.

In North Dakota 39% of residents rent their home or apartment. Many of these people are low-income residents and struggle to pay high rents and care for themselves and their families. A simple emergency expense forces folks to choose between medical care, school expenses, care repairs or rent. They are late with rent not because they are irresponsible with their money but because there simply isn't enough to meet basic needs.

Landlords should be able to charge late fees because they too have expenses, but 8% is a reasonable amount. It is significantly more than a landlord would make on the funds if paid on time and invested at current interest rates. There is no reason why a landlord should be able to take advantage or make excessive profits at the expense of tenants who have fallen on hard times. Enough is enough.

I serve a small congregation in Grand Forks which often pays fees or back rent for families who need help to retain their housing. We are happy to pay a reasonable amount, but excessive fees simply mean we can help fewer people and fewer landlords get paid. This would be true of all the folks in the state who help our neighbors when needed. Capping rates at 8% help all of us insure that families who live among us are able to pay off late fees and move forward in safe housing.