

My name is Liza Andrew and I support SB 1496.

I am the creator of the group Renters For Change North Dakota (Legislative Action For Renters North Dakota). This group primarily runs on Facebook and at this point has almost 2,000 members. I bring up this fact to give the council an idea of how many renters in North Dakota want and need change. I have spoken to many renters over the course of the three months this group has been active and one of the main concerns I hear is about heat in the winter.

As we all know North Dakota is very unique for many reasons but how cold it can get is one of the more dangerous reasons. And I have heard from numerous tenants who have been living in freezing conditions when the weather is below zero. This can be devastating to health. And when maintenance won't answer the phone (an all too common story) then what are you meant to do?

I want to address Jill Beck's opposition in my testimony. She states that tenants have the ability to get out of leases if the landlord is not repairing a furnace or providing reasonable heat. This statement leaves out an important piece of information. A lessor may terminate lease according to North Dakota Century Code section 47-16-16 2.

Does not make such repairs as the lessee is bound to make within a reasonable time after a request is made.

What does this mean? This section of the law is left completely up to opinion. So a reasonable time could be anywhere from a couple hours (in the dead of winter with negative temperature this is reasonable) to months to even never being addressed. That means it's almost impossible to break a lease for this reason. This isn't something I am hypothesizing either! I hear testimonies about this situation from many tenants who rent from many different property management companies.

I've said this in the past and I will say this again. The law should never be left up to opinion. SB 1496 would allow a clear guideline for both parties. Should disagreements arise this is critical for both parties' protection. But is especially important for tenants when it comes to small claims court.

Please do pass SB 1496.

Thank you.