

**SENATE . . . . . No. 948**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Bruce E. Tarr***

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act promoting rental housing stability.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Bruce E. Tarr</i>	<i>First Essex and Middlesex</i>	
<i>Ryan C. Fattman</i>	<i>Worcester and Norfolk</i>	<i>2/3/2017</i>
<i>Richard J. Ross</i>	<i>Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex</i>	<i>3/3/2017</i>

**SENATE . . . . . No. 948**

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By Mr. Tarr, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 948) of Bruce E. Tarr and Ryan C. Fattman for legislation to promote rental housing stability. The Judiciary.

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 906 OF 2015-2016.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court  
(2017-2018)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act promoting rental housing stability.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           SECTION 1. Section 1A of chapter 239 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016  
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting at the end thereof the following paragraph:

3           A lessor of land or tenements used for residential purposes may bring an emergency  
4 action to recover possession upon a showing that significant damage to the premises is occurring  
5 or is likely to result from continued occupancy of the tenant. A hearing on such action shall be  
6 held within 14 days after the action is initiated.

7           SECTION 2. Section 8A of said chapter 239, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
8 striking the second paragraph in its entirety and inserting in place thereof the following:

9           Whenever any counterclaim or claim of defense under this section is based on any  
10 allegation concerning the condition of the premises or the services or equipment provided  
11 therein, the tenant or occupant shall not be entitled to relief under this section unless:

12           (1) the owner or his agents, servants, or employees, or the person to whom the tenant or  
13 occupant customarily paid his rent knew of such conditions before the tenant or occupant was in  
14 arrears in his rent;

15           (2) the tenant, within 7 days of the typical rent payment date, deposited the withheld rent  
16 with the clerk to be held in escrow;

17           (3) the plaintiff does not show that such conditions were caused by the tenant or occupant  
18 or any other person acting under his control; except that the defendant shall have the burden of  
19 proving that any violation appearing solely within that portion of the premises under his control  
20 and not by its nature reasonably attributable to any action or failure to act of the plaintiff was not  
21 so caused;

22           (4) the tenant shows that, upon reasonable notice by the owner, they did not unreasonably  
23 deny access to the owner or owner's representative to make the repairs or alterations;

24           (5) the premises are not situated in a hotel or motel, nor in a lodging house or rooming  
25 house wherein the occupant has maintained such occupancy for less than three consecutive  
26 months; and

27           (6) the plaintiff does not show that the conditions complained of cannot be remedied  
28 without the premises being vacated; provided, however, that nothing in this clause shall be  
29 construed to deprive the tenant or occupant of relief under this section when the premises are

30 temporarily vacated for purposes of removal or covering of paint, plaster, soil or other accessible  
31 materials containing dangerous levels of lead pursuant to section one hundred and ninety-seven  
32 of chapter one hundred and eleven.

33 SECTION 3. Said section 8A of said chapter 239, as so appearing, is hereby further  
34 amended in the last sentence of the fourth paragraph by striking, in line 74, the word “may” and  
35 inserting in place thereof the following word:- “shall”.

36 SECTION 4. Said section 8A of said chapter 239, as so appearing, is hereby further  
37 amended by inserting at the end thereof the following paragraph:-

38 Any rent withheld and placed in escrow with the clerk based on any allegation  
39 concerning the condition of the premises or the services or equipment provided therein, shall be  
40 released to the owner or owner’s representative within 21 days following cure of the defect for  
41 which rent was withheld, provided that the local board of health has inspected the property and  
42 certified that the defect has been cured.