

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you as the Chair of the Rental Housing Advisory Board (RHAB), which was created by the Legislature in 2018 “to act as an advisory group to the Governor, General Assembly, and appropriate State agencies on issues related to rental housing statutes, policies, and regulations” and to submit to the Legislature “potential legislation or policy changes to better support decent, safe, and sanitary rental housing.” The RHAB, which I believe is well balanced, includes three municipal representatives. The work of the RHAB can be found on the [Agency of Commerce and Community Development \(ACCD\) website](#).

To date, the focus of the RHAB has been the state’s Rental Housing Health Code enforcement system, a very complex and difficult issue for communities. In most towns, the burden of enforcement relies primarily on volunteer town health officers. The RHAB and many others see a critical need to improve our current system and find a more effective way to tackle housing quality. In 2019 the RHAB offered a series of recommendations to the Legislature. Those that passed this year are attached as part of [Act 48](#) (pages 11-17).

The primary initiative required by [this legislation](#) is for the Department of Health and the Department of Public Safety, in collaboration with the RHAB, to develop no later than Jan. 15 2020 “recommendations for the design and implementation of a comprehensive system for the professional enforcement of State rental housing health and safety laws.”

As required by [the legislation](#), the Department of Health is asking towns to submit information concerning rental housing inspections conducted by town health officers, as well as any enforcement actions taken under the Rental Housing Health Code. This data, which reaches back to July 1 of 2018 and is required going forward, will feed into a needs assessment the Department of Health must do to look at the number of rental housing inspections conducted, and the types of violations found.

The request for data is critical for the State to understand the nature and volume of rental housing complaints that are received in each town. While I realize that towns receive many requests for data, this particular request is extremely important to provide an understanding of the scope of the issue and inform proposals for 2020 to create a more effective program and relieve towns of some of this burden. I ask your support in getting this information to the Department of Health.

The RHAB meetings are open to the public and we plan to have some regional meetings this fall. I invite you to attend or to contact me directly with any thoughts or suggestions you have.

Thank you so much for your assistance with this.



Sarah Carpenter
Chair, Rental Housing Advisory Board
carpentervt@outlook.com
802-999-9681