

EXHIBIT 1

The Providence Journal

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Tenants in once-condemned Cranston complex are unionizing

The building was condemned in 2021, then reopened



Wheeler Cowperthwaite

Providence Journal

April 2, 2024 | Updated April 4, 2024, 7:00 a.m. ET

CRANSTON – Melissa Potter opens the front door of her apartment at 1890 Broad St. and looks down into a flooded trench at least 6 feet deep that runs along the front of the building.

Potter and nine of the 17 other tenants in the building, condemned in 2021 and then reopened just on the first floor a year later, gathered in front of their once-green courtyard with representatives from the [advocacy group ReclaimRI](#) to say they are forming a tenants union to try to force owner [Jeffrey Butler](#) and his company [Elmwood Realty](#) to bargain on new leases and fix the property.

The apartment building was entirely shut down and its 39 families pushed out [in July 2021](#) after a woman nearly fell through a second-floor walkway and city officials determined the building was uninhabitable, [the Cranston Herald reported](#) at the time.

Photos and [video from WJAR show](#) a pleasant courtyard with bushes, grass and other plantings. That has been replaced with caution tape, mud, ripped-up trees, the trench and a construction dumpster.

The second-story walkways have been removed, and many apartment doors stand open. The brick façade on most of the building has been removed, leaving behind a black-tinted cinderblock surface. One one side of the building, the yellow façade is still falling off.

The Providence Journal

Tenant Audrey Gordon said she called repeatedly about the door being open in the apartment above hers, which allowed the pipes to freeze, which flooded her apartment.

"It flooded in my kitchen first, then in my living room, and instead of cutting it out and venting it to get all the wetness out of it, or just cutting it out in general, they just painted over it," Gordon said. "And so they still have the door open, and reasonably it could flood again."

Her daughter is hooked up to a feeding tube, so she had to roll her and the machine out of the way of the water. She enlisted her daughter's nurse to help bail water out of the apartment.

"It was a lot," she said. "It was like five buckets of water that we're dumping out."

Potter said they want the heating systems to be fixed, the major construction outside their doors to be finished and Butler to deal with the flooding.

They said they received no notice about construction on the site, or the massive trench in front of their front doors. The only emails they receive are admonishments not to throw household trash in the construction dumpster.

The site looks so dangerous that Cranston firefighters responding to calls have assumed everyone must be squatting, Potter said.

Tenants say state agencies placed them in bad situations

Eugene Vasquez, 21, who aged out of the Department of Children, Youth & Families' [Voluntary Extension of Care Program](#) program in February, said he was placed at the apartment complex by a social worker who would not let him inspect the

The Providence Journal

Vasquez and his girlfriend are paying \$1,150 for a studio apartment and had to complain repeatedly about gaping holes between a newly installed bathtub and the floor next to it. Mice had been coming through the holes and into his apartment from the basement.

The gaps are now smaller, and he is unsure if mice will still get through. ([Mice can squeeze through holes as small as](#) a quarter of an inch, about as wide as a pencil).

Audrey Gordon said she and her children were placed at the complex through a state program after everyone was kicked out of the shelter she had been in because of mold.

"I've lost faith in the state," she said.

Building sold in December 2021

The building was sold by HPM Capital Partners to Butler's Spring Street Realty LLC in December 2021. City officials said they were having problems with HPM Capital Partners, and property manager Josh Hennessy, when the building first closed, [according to WJAR](#).

Butler did not respond to requests for comment.

Tenants fear reprisals from landlord sued over retaliation at other property

All of the tenants who gathered last week said they are worried that Butler will retaliate against them. ReclaimRI organizer and state Rep. [Cherie Cruz](#), D-Pawtucket said that after they dropped off the notice at his office, one of the staff members there attempted to get everyone's names.

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threatening to evict the tenants, the ACLU says.

More: Their landlord threatened eviction when these tenants organized. Then, they won a victory in court.

With no framework to enable a union, what does it mean?

While renters have had a right to [organize since 1986](#), it's been little more than just that: a right to organize.

The law has none of the framework [of labor organizing](#), such as who adjudicates claims, who can be part of a union or the general rules of collective bargaining.

[Rep. David Morales, D-Providence](#) has introduced [H7962](#), which would create a tenant union framework.

Cruz said the main leverage the renters have to bring Butler to the negotiating table is withholding rent. Under a law passed last session, the amount tenants can deduct from rent for repairs they [make increased from \\$125 to \\$500](#).

Rent strikes are not novel in Rhode Island. [In 1990](#), a federal court approved an [agreement](#) between the Providence Housing Authority and tenants at two of its properties, [Hartford Park](#) and [Manton Heights](#), following a 34-month rent strike over bad conditions. A total of \$600,000 in rent was accumulated in an escrow account, as researched by [The Public's Radio](#).

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*Reach reporter Wheeler Cowperthwaite
at wcowperthwaite@providencejournal.com or follow him on*

The Providence Journal

[providencejournal.com](https://www.providencejournal.com)

See the conditions at 1890 Broad St. after it reopened in 2022.

2–3 minutes

LOCAL

April 2, 2024, 7:50 a.m. ET



At 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, the front doors to many of the apartments open into a ditch. The foundation of the building, and pipes sticking up, is visible here.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal





The trench in front of front doors at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston is part of ongoing construction that residents say needs to be finished.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal



What was once a green courtyard has been ripped up and

replaced with a construction dumpster at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal



A fire alarm dangles from the ceiling, above the second story apartments at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal





The gaps between the bathtub and basement were were so big that mice freely ran through this apartment. The gaps have been somewhat sealed, but not long enough to know if the mice will come back.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal



The front door of Eugene Velasquez's apartment opens a trench

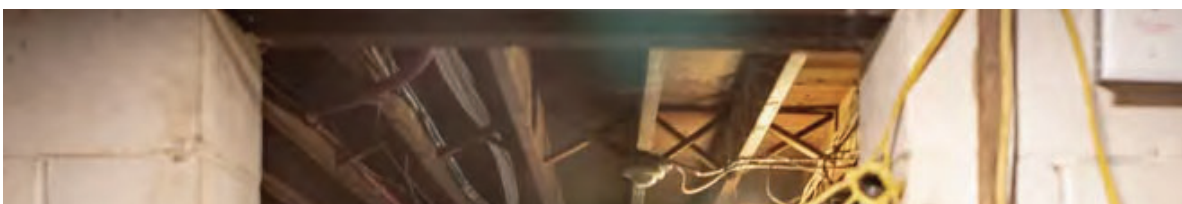
along the side at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal



Melissa Potter holds open her front door, which opens to a 6-foot trench, at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal





The basement of the 1890 Broad St. apartments in Cranston.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal





The yellow masonry facade is falling off in pieces on the side of the building at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston. On most of the rest of the building, it has been entirely removed, revealing the blackened cinderblocks.

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal



Eugene Vasquez stands in front of his front door at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston

Wheeler Cowperthwaite/The Providence Journal

EXHIBIT 2

HOUSING

'I have a moat... but this is no castle': R.I. renters battle flooding, pests, problematic landlord

By [Alexa Gagosz](#) Globe Staff, Updated April 2, 2024, 9:22 a.m.



Melissa Potter, 46, of Cranston, Rhode Island, looked out of her ground-floor apartment unit's front door to a moat of brown, murky water and dirt. The property is owned by Elmwood Realty and its manager Jeffrey T. Butler, who has been sued by tenants for unsafe conditions before. ALEXA GAGOSZ

CRANSTON, R.I. — Melissa Potter swung open the flimsy storm door of her ground-floor apartment to reveal a several-foot drop into a trench filled with muddy brown water. Pieces of trash from a nearby dumpster floated in the muck, and mounds of dirt lay just beyond it.

“Look, I have a moat outside my door. But this is no castle,” said Potter, 46, who moved into the apartment building on Broad Street in March 2022 with her fiancé.

Potter has spent most of her career working with adults who have developmental disabilities. The \$1,150-a-month one-bedroom apartment was supposed to be a “fresh start” for the couple, but after suffering from a brief illness, her fiancé died just two months later, in May 2022. Since then, Potter has battled problems that include flooding, mice and rats, a faulty heating system, and a landlord she calls “unresponsive” and “negligent.”

Potter isn’t the only frustrated tenant in the building. Last Friday, Potter and nine other renters at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, which is owned by Elmwood Realty LLC, stood shoulder to shoulder and announced that they had officially formed a tenants union. Organizers with Reclaim R.I., a progressive tenants rights group, called it the first step to creating a statewide tenants union that would hold landlords accountable for addressing maintenance issues and keeping rents affordable.



Melissa Potter in the laundry area at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, R.I.. A ceiling light is held in place by a pipe. ALEXA GAGOSZ/
GLOBE STAFF

As rent costs continue to spike and eviction filings are on the rise, efforts to form unions for renters have gained new momentum across New England.

Efforts to improve housing conditions have been bubbling [in New Hampshire](#) and [Vermont](#) for the last several years, and the [Connecticut Tenants Union](#) has helped renters form at least 16 unions since 2021. In Maine, [at least two tenant unions have formed in Portland](#), and another was organized [in Brunswick](#) in late 2023.

In large urban areas like Greater Boston, organizations have been focused on [combating mass displacement and rent increases](#). City Life/Vida Urbana, a bilingual organization based in Jamaica Plain, has supported tenant associations and other movements for the last five decades.

Tenants could negotiate the same way a labor union would, and can coordinate actions against landlords such as withholding rent until certain maintenance issues are addressed, said state Representative Cherie Cruz, who is also a Reclaim R.I. organizer.

Last Friday afternoon, Cruz escorted some of the tenants to Elmwood Realty's offices, where they attempted to notify their landlord, company manager Jeffrey T. Butler, of their unionization efforts in person.

Butler did not immediately respond to requests for comment from the Globe. The real estate companies he manages own more than 350 units in Rhode Island, and he rents some of them to low-income individuals who have housing vouchers or are on other public subsidies. His tenants have had issues with him before.



Tenants and elected officials gathered with Represetnative Cherie Cruz (center, in red), outside 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, R.I.
ALEXA GAGOSZ

In December 2023, the ACLU and Rhode Island Center for Justice [filed a lawsuit on behalf of four tenants](#) in West Warwick and Pawtucket against Butler and Elmwood Realty after they said Butler threatened them with evictions for being associated with Reclaim R.I. The tenants also alleged that Butler had tried to intimidate them by sending groups of men to hand deliver unofficial termination-of-tenancy notices. In early February, two of the tenants and Butler [reached an interim settlement in court](#); Butler agreed to not follow through on the eviction proceedings and to pay for some of the damages.

Now, tenants at 1890 Broad St. say they want more transparency around ongoing construction and more urgency when dealing with maintenance and repair issues. Many of the tenants also reported frequent rent increases, even as repair issues remained abundant and unresolved.

Cranston [declared](#) the building uninhabitable in July 2021, when 39 families were displaced after the second-floor walkway fell apart. A few months later, Elmwood Management purchased the building from Hennessy Property Management for \$3.5 million, and tenants were allowed to rent first-floor units, though the second floor is still condemned and vacant.

In 2021, television news reports showed the property with beige faux-brick siding and a grassy courtyard. The second-floor walkway was crumbling, but the first-floor walkway was a tidy concrete sidewalk dotted with plastic patio furniture.

Less than three years later, the property looks like a construction site. The faux-brick siding is gone, and cement-block walls coated with black water-proofing material are exposed. Broken storm doors on the deserted second floor slam in the wind. A dumpster sits in the middle of the courtyard, which is filled with piles of dirt and strewn with trash, broken glass, and debris.



The property at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, R.I., is owned by Elmwood Realty. ALEXA GAGOSZ/ GLOBE STAFF

There are two active building permits with the city, dated January 2022 and July 2022, but neither appear to be for work taking place in the courtyard.

“When I take the trash out to the dumpster, rats literally scurry around. It’s disgusting,” said Stephanie Severino, 26. She said that Butler has failed to fix the broken glass of her storm door, despite her repeated requests.

Eugene Vasquez, 21, said the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families helped him find his studio apartment at 1890 Broad St. He had aged out of the system, and has no support from family members or guardians, Vasquez said.

His front door also opens out to the trench. His heat stopped working this winter, he said, and his apartment was below 50 degrees. “This is sealed shut,” Vasquez said,

pointing to a window. "I called the city, and the guy who came out here kind of shrugged his shoulders. But I'm like, isn't this a fire hazard? I only have one way in and one way out. This place is unsafe."



Eugene Vasquez, 21, looked out his apartment building's front door. ALEXA GAGOSZ/ GLOBE STAFF

Damaris Teixeira, a spokesperson for DCYF, said the agency provides case management services and supports for eligible youths in the Voluntary Extension of Care program aged 18 through 21. But the Broad Street property "is no longer one of the options DCYF offers VEC youth when they are looking for housing," said Teixeira, who declined to provide further details.

Audrey Gordon, 34, was pregnant and homeless after she left her ex-husband. She and her children lived for a while in a makeshift homeless shelter at the closed Memorial

Hospital in Pawtucket, and a series of Globe investigations showed the property's [dismal conditions](#) while children were living there.

Now in her \$1,250-per-month apartment, Gordon has dealt with significant flooding from the condemned apartment above her first-floor unit. Instead of cutting out the ceiling to properly remediate it, maintenance workers painted over the damage, Gordon said. She lives in the unit with her four children, including a baby who has disabilities. But mice are “extremely common, no matter how much I scrub this place every day,” said Gordon.

Gordon said she blames both her landlord and the state for what she calls “the lack of protections for tenants.” She said she hopes forming a union will help Butler realize that the residents are “real people who just want to live in decency.”

“My former shelter was shut down because of disgusting conditions,” said Gordon. “But anyone is allowed to live like this? We’re working people and we deserve better than living in a slum.”

Alexa Gagosz can be reached at alexa.gagosz@globe.com. Follow her [@alexagagosz](#) and on Instagram [@AlexaGagosz](#).



Show 18 comments

EXHIBIT 3

BUSINESS

Mice, frozen pipes, flooded basements: Tenants in once-condemned Cranston complex are unionizing

The building was condemned in 2021, then reopened



Wheeler Cowperthwaite
Providence Journal

April 2, 2024 Updated April 4, 2024, 7:00 a.m. ET



Cranston
March 29, 2024



CHERIE CRUZ
ReclaimRI/Pawtucket Rep.

1890 Broad St. in Cranston tenants talk about building conditions

Tenants at 1890 Broad Street give tours of the 2021-condemned building, reopened a year later, as they form a union.

00:00:01:16 - 00:00:05:31	Cherie Cruz: Here at 1890 Broad St, in Cranston, Rhode Island
00:00:05:31 - 00:00:09:30	where a majority of the tenants who lived here have come together
00:00:09:30 - 00:00:11:48	to form their first tenant union.
00:00:11:48 - 00:00:16:11	And what we know of in Rhode Island— the first tenant union in the private market.
00:00:16:11 - 00:00:21:03	Melissa Potter: We organized the majority of the tenants to request our landlord, Elmwood Realty, LLC
00:00:21:03 - 00:00:23:19	to come to the negotiation table with their tenants
00:00:23:19 - 00:00:26:28	to negotiate a collectively bargained lease.
00:00:26:28 - 00:00:31:20	A collectively bargain lease that includes quality and timely repairs,
00:00:31:20 - 00:00:36:27	safe housing conditions, and stable and fair rents, and free from retaliation
00:00:36:27 - 00:00:42:36	Audrey Gordon: I've been calling and letting them know that it's still open after it had flooded because the pipes burst
00:00:42:36 - 00:00:45:04	because the door was open, and the door is still open.
00:00:45:04 - 00:00:50:11	Animals can come in there and and get into my apartment, and it's—
	Unknown speaker: How many times have you flooded?
00:00:50:11 - 00:00:54:18	Unknown speaker 2: [overlapping] Most of the doors are open.
	Audrey Gordon: like, four times, maybe five.
00:00:54:23 - 00:01:00:16	Eugene Vasquez (after press conference—interviewed in apartment): So they, they sealed it with this caulk all the way around.
00:01:00:16 - 00:01:01:33	It's sealed shut.
00:01:01:33 - 00:01:04:24	So you can try this window all day, man, and it's not opening nothing.
00:01:04:24 - 00:01:06:24	This is the part that opens though.
00:01:06:24 - 00:01:10:09	This is, this is supposed to be on the outside.
00:01:10:09 - 00:01:13:41	See? They tried to screw it shut, it didn't work, so they sealed it.

00:01:13:41 - 00:01:20:06	Zip tie it, right up there. You know? Cost them, like, fifty cents.
00:01:20:11 - 00:01:23:32	Unknown Speaker 3: So these are the creepy conditions that we've been living in.
00:01:23:32 - 00:01:27:20	I have to get back with Cherie so we can deliver that, before they leave for the day.

EXHIBIT 4



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

DISTRICT COURT

COMPLAINT AND MOTION FOR TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER - TENANT AGAINST LANDLORD

Plaintiff Kellee Silva	Civil Action File Number 30A-2024-02834
Defendant Elmwood Realty LLC	Attorney for the Plaintiff or the Plaintiff
Address of the Defendant 2077 Elmwood Ave Warwick 02888	Address of the Plaintiff's Attorney or the Plaintiff 1890 Broad St Cranston Apt 110
<input type="checkbox"/> Murray Judicial Complex 2nd Division District Court 45 Washington Square Newport, Rhode Island 02840-2913 (401) 841-8350	<input type="checkbox"/> Noel Judicial Complex 3rd Division District Court 222 Quaker Lane Warwick, Rhode Island 02886-0107 (401) 822-6750
<input type="checkbox"/> McGrath Judicial Complex 4th Division District Court 4800 Tower Hill Road Wakefield, Rhode Island 02879-2239 (401) 782-4131	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garrahy Judicial Complex 6th Division District Court One Dorrance Plaza Providence, Rhode Island 02903-2719 (401) 458-5400

Pursuant to G.L. 1956 §§ 34-18-6, 34-18-34, and/or 34-18-45, the Plaintiff hereby requests that this court enter a Temporary Restraining Order for the reasons set forth below. In support of this Complaint and Motion, the Plaintiff states:

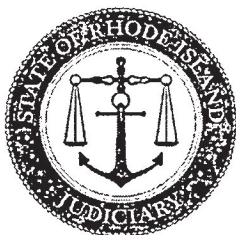
1. The Plaintiff is the tenant of the rental premises located at: 1890 Broad St. Cranston RI 02905

2. The Defendant is the landlord/owner of the property.

3. The Defendant has violated G.L. 1956 §§ 34-18-44 and/or 34-18-26 by doing one (1) or more of the following:

☐ The Defendant changed the locks to Plaintiff's apartment or otherwise excluded Plaintiff from the apartment.

☒ The Defendant shut off or otherwise interrupted Plaintiff's utility service, specifically: (Check as needed)
☐ Electricity ☒ Heat ☐ Gas ☐ Water ☒ Other: mouse infestation, hole from my bathroom into basement, windows screwed shut.



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY
DISTRICT COURT

☒ The Defendant has abused the right to reasonable access by entering the Plaintiff's apartment without giving the Plaintiff prior notice and without obtaining the Plaintiff's consent.

4. The Plaintiff has been harmed by these actions and will suffer irreparable harm if the court does not enter a Temporary Order as requested in this Motion and Complaint.

5. The Plaintiff contacted or attempted to contact the Defendant to tell the Defendant of this request for a Temporary Restraining Order by doing the following: called

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff asks this court to:

1. Enter a Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary and Permanent Injunction, enjoining the Defendant to:

- ☐ Immediately give Plaintiff full access to and use of the rental premises and to return any property he/she may have removed from Plaintiff's apartment.
- ☒ Immediately restore all utility services that he/she terminated or interrupted.
- ☒ Cease and desist from entering Plaintiff's apartment without first giving Plaintiff proper notice and obtaining Plaintiff's prior consent except in case of emergency.

and

2. Award the Plaintiff statutory damages as allowed by G.L. 1956 §§ 34-18-34 and/or 34-18-45 and grant such further relief as this court deems fit and proper.

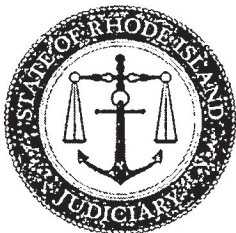
I, Kellee Silva, after being duly sworn, depose on oath and state that I am the Plaintiff in the above-entitled case, and I have personal knowledge of the matters to which the Complaint refers, and that these matters are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Name of the Plaintiff

Kellee Silva

Signature of the Plaintiff

Kellee Silva



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY
DISTRICT COURT

State of Rhode Island
County of providence

On this 5th day of April, 2024, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared Kellee J. Silva

☐ personally known to the notary or ☒ proved to the notary through satisfactory evidence of identification, which was RI Driver's Lic, to be the person who signed above in my presence, and who swore or affirmed to the notary that the contents of the document are truthful to the best of his or her knowledge.

Notary Public: [Signature]

My commission expires: 7-1-26

Notary identification number: 759075

ATTORNEY CERTIFICATE

/s/ _____ Attorney for the Plaintiff	Rhode Island Bar Number:
	Date:
Office Telephone Number:	



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

DISTRICT COURT

TENANT RESTRAINING ORDER AGAINST LANDLORD - AFFIDAVIT

Plaintiff Kellee J Silva	Civil Action File Number
Defendant Elmwood Realty LLC	

I, Kellee Silva, on oath do depose and state as follows.

1. My name is Kellee Silva
2. I reside at 1890 Broad St Cranston RI 02905 Apt 110.
3. My landlord is Elmwood Realty LLC. Jeffrey Butler
4. The following has occurred:

NO heat - I moved in January 1st and have had heat maybe 7 days total. my heat was below 50 for 4 days straight.
I have a mouse infestation with many holes in my walls/floors. they hide and stay in my stove. there is ~~cat~~ ~~poop~~ mouse poop everywhere.
Elmwood Realty broke into my apartment while I was at work with a 20 minute notice but I was at work so I didn't see the email. I called the cops and put it on file.
Heat is included in rent. having to run space heaters. theres a hole in my bathroom down to basement. can see into my bathroom from the basement. Screwed window shut.

Name of the Plaintiff

Kellee Silva

Signature of the Plaintiff

Kellee Silva



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

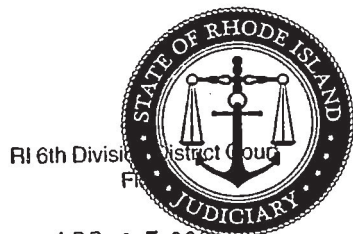
DISTRICT COURT

State of Rhode Island
County of Providence

On this 5 day of April, 2024, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared Kellee J. Silva

☐ personally known to the notary or ☒ proved to the notary through satisfactory evidence of identification, which was RI Driver's Lic., to be the person who signed above in my presence, and who swore or affirmed to the notary that the contents of the document are truthful to the best of his or her knowledge.

Notary Public: [Signature]
My commission expires: 7-1-26
Notary identification number: 759075



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

DISTRICT COURT

COMPLAINT AND MOTION FOR TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER - TENANT AGAINST LANDLORD

Waleada Shepard
Clerk

Plaintiff Melissa R. Potter	Civil Action File Number 30A-2024-0283
Defendant Elmwood Realty LLC	Attorney for the Plaintiff or the Plaintiff
Address of the Defendant 2077 Elmwood Ave Warwick, RI 02888	Address of the Plaintiff's Attorney or the Plaintiff 1890 Broad St. Apt 111 Cranston, RI 02905

<input type="checkbox"/> Murray Judicial Complex 2nd Division District Court 45 Washington Square Newport, Rhode Island 02840-2913 (401) 841-8350	<input type="checkbox"/> Noel Judicial Complex 3rd Division District Court 222 Quaker Lane Warwick, Rhode Island 02886-0107 (401) 822-6750
<input type="checkbox"/> McGrath Judicial Complex 4th Division District Court 4800 Tower Hill Road Wakefield, Rhode Island 02879-2239 (401) 782-4131	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garrahy Judicial Complex 6th Division District Court One Dorrance Plaza Providence, Rhode Island 02903-2719 (401) 458-5400

Pursuant to G.L. 1956 §§ 34-18-6, 34-18-34, and/or 34-18-45, the Plaintiff hereby requests that this court enter a Temporary Restraining Order for the reasons set forth below. In support of this Complaint and Motion, the Plaintiff states:

1. The Plaintiff is the tenant of the rental premises located at: 1890 Broad St
Apt 111 Cranston, RI 02905

2. The Defendant is the landlord/owner of the property.

3. The Defendant has violated G.L. 1956 §§ 34-18-44 and/or 34-18-26 by doing one (1) or more of the following:

☐ The Defendant changed the locks to Plaintiff's apartment or otherwise excluded Plaintiff from the apartment.

☒ The Defendant shut off or otherwise interrupted Plaintiff's utility service, specifically: (Check as needed)

☐ Electricity ☒ Heat ☐ Gas ☐ Water ☒ Other: broken wall, trench
in front of door
mold from flood



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

DISTRICT COURT

- ☐ The Defendant has abused the right to reasonable access by entering the Plaintiff's apartment without giving the Plaintiff prior notice and without obtaining the Plaintiff's consent.

4. The Plaintiff has been harmed by these actions and will suffer irreparable harm if the court does not enter a Temporary Order as requested in this Motion and Complaint.

5. The Plaintiff contacted or attempted to contact the Defendant to tell the Defendant of this request for a Temporary Restraining Order by doing the following: called landlord

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff asks this court to:

1. Enter a Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary and Permanent Injunction, enjoining the Defendant to:

- ☐ Immediately give Plaintiff full access to and use of the rental premises and to return any property he/she may have removed from Plaintiff's apartment.
- ☒ Immediately restore all utility services that he/she terminated or interrupted.
- ☒ Cease and desist from entering Plaintiff's apartment without first giving Plaintiff proper notice and obtaining Plaintiff's prior consent except in case of emergency.

and

2. Award the Plaintiff statutory damages as allowed by G.L. 1956 §§ 34-18-34 and/or 34-18-45 and grant such further relief as this court deems fit and proper.

I, Melissa R. Foster, after being duly sworn, depose on oath and state that I am the Plaintiff in the above-entitled case, and I have personal knowledge of the matters to which the Complaint refers, and that these matters are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Name of the Plaintiff

Melissa R. Foster

Signature of the Plaintiff

Melissa R. Foster



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY
DISTRICT COURT

TENANT RESTRAINING ORDER AGAINST LANDLORD - AFFIDAVIT

Plaintiff Melissa Potter	Civil Action File Number
Defendant Elmwood Realty LLC	

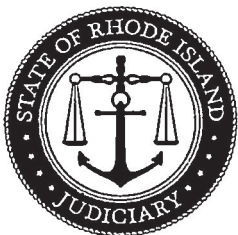
I, Melissa Potter, on oath do depose and state as follows.

1. My name is Melissa R Potter
2. I reside at 1890 Broad St. Apt 111 Cranston
3. My landlord is Elmwood Realty LLC
4. The following has occurred:

I have repeatedly been without heat throughout the winter months for the 2 yrs I've lived on the property. Broken wall in bedroom 2022 and mold from a flood in feb 2023 in bedroom responses go unanswered or work isn't adequate.

heat is included in rent

Name of the Plaintiff Melissa Potter
Signature of the Plaintiff Melissa R Potter



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

DISTRICT COURT

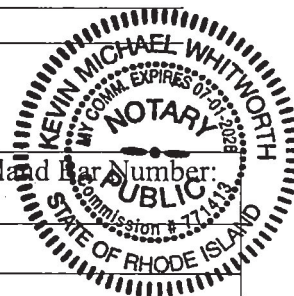
State of Rhode Island
County of Providence

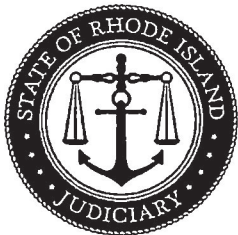
On this 5th day of April, 2024, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared Melissa Patten
☐ personally known to the notary or ☒ proved to the notary through satisfactory evidence of identification, which was RI State Driver License, to be the person who signed above in my presence, and who swore or affirmed to the notary that the contents of the document are truthful to the best of his or her knowledge.

Notary Public: Kevin Michael Whitworth
My commission expires: _____
Notary identification number: _____

ATTORNEY CERTIFICATE

/s/ <u>Melissa Patten</u> Attorney for the Plaintiff	Rhode Island Bar Number: _____
	Date: _____
Office Telephone Number: _____	





STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

DISTRICT COURT

State of Rhode Island
County of Providence

On this 5th day of April, 2024, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared Melissa Potter

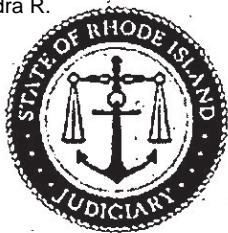
☐ personally known to the notary or ☒ proved to the notary through satisfactory evidence of identification, which was R.F. Daniels LLC, to be the person who signed above in my presence, and who swore or affirmed to the notary that the contents of the document are truthful to the best of his or her knowledge.

Notary Public: Kevin Whitcomb

My commission expires: _____

Notary identification number: _____

EXHIBIT 5



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

DISTRICT COURT

ORDER

Plaintiff Melissa R. Potter, <i>Stephanie Rodriguez, Kellen Silva</i> v. Defendant Elmwood Realty	Civil Action File Number 3CA-2024-02831 <i>3CA2024-2835</i> <i>3CA2024-2804</i>
---	---

The above-entitled case having been heard before *T. Bellamy* Chief Judge/Associate Judge/Magistrate
on _____ and after due consideration thereon it is hereby:

ORDERED, ADJUDGE, AND DECREED

☐ Motion is Granted

☐ Motion is Denied

☒ Other:

hearing in April 1st, 2024 at 10:00am
(1) Does the tenant have (water) Electricity -
defects (2) ~~Plaintiff~~ going to do in person
24 hours / 48 hours notice -
(3) ~~Plaintiff~~ to Police EMAIL Address
(4)

Entered as an Order of the District Court on this *5th* day of *April*, 20*24*

ENTERED: <i>[Signature]</i> Chief Judge/Associate Judge/Magistrate	BY ORDER: /s/ Dawn Bellamy Clerk
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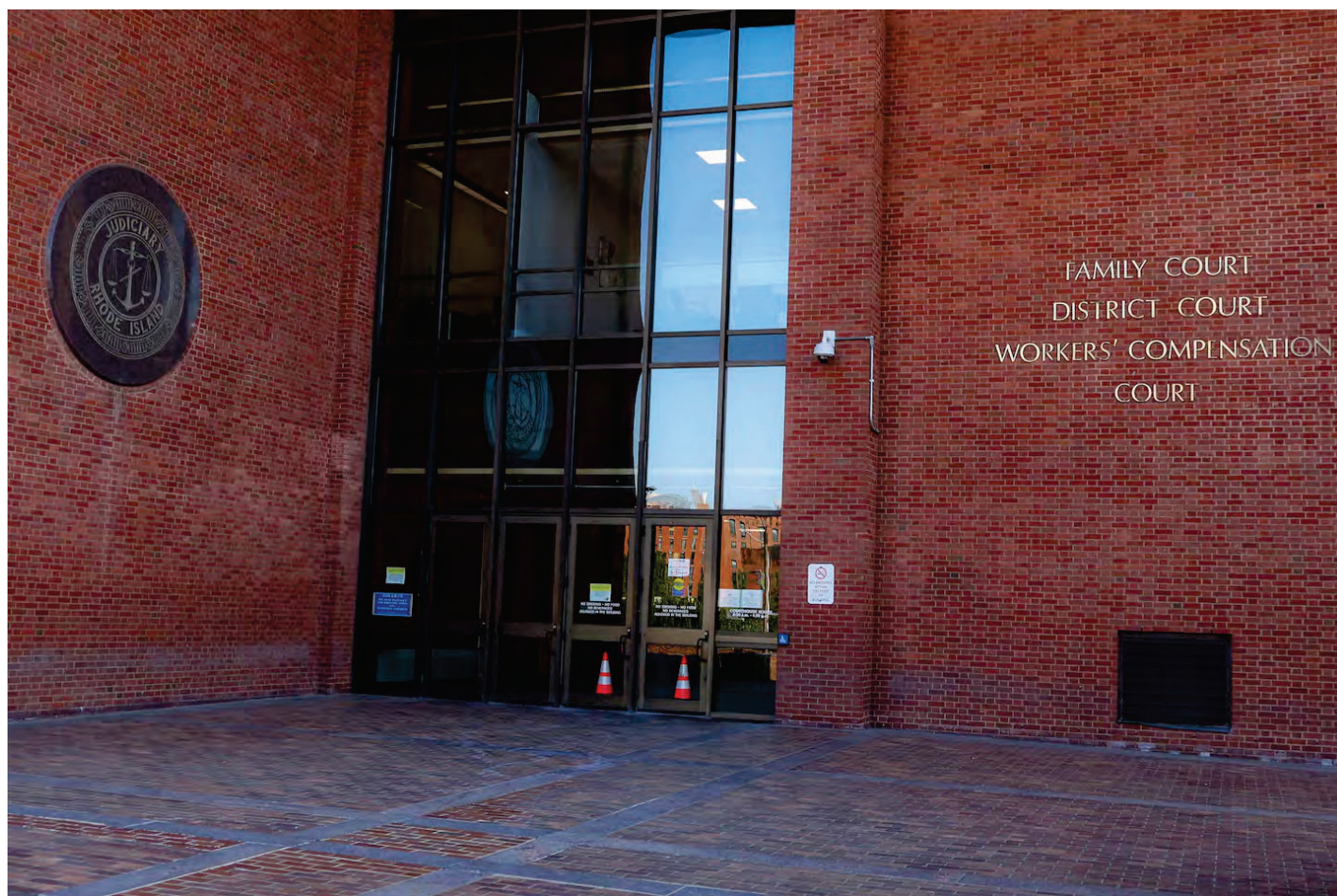
EXHIBIT 6

RI HOUSING

Tenants threatened with eviction after they spoke to R.I. housing rights group, lawsuit claims

The ACLU and R.I. Center for Justice have filed a lawsuit on behalf of low-income tenants in Pawtucket and West Warwick, arguing that the threats are a violation of state law

By **Alexa Gagosz** Globe Staff, Updated December 29, 2023, 6:03 p.m.



Rhode Island District Court in Providence, R.I. MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

PAWTUCKET, R.I. — Attorneys from the R.I. Center for Justice and the local branch of the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on behalf of four low-income tenants in West Warwick and Pawtucket who have been threatened with evictions for being associated with a nonprofit that helps tenants advocate for safe and healthy housing conditions.

The lawsuit was filed Friday against Elmood Realty LLC, and its manager Jeffrey T. Butler. Attorneys with the ACLU and Center for Justice argue the threats against the tenants are a violation of state law, which prohibits retaliation against individuals for becoming members of tenant's rights organizations.

In September, organizers for the nonprofit, Reclaim RI, spoke with tenants at Elmwood's housing complexes in Pawtucket and West Warwick about organizing to address concerns about the conditions in their apartments. Some of the tenants called the city's code enforcement agency to report housing violations, including the lack of a working carbon monoxide monitor, among other issues. As a result, the tenants were given notices of lease terminations.

The suit was filed by Rhode Island District Court in Providence by Center for Justice attorneys Jennifer Wood, Samuel Cramer and John Karwashan, and ACLU cooperating attorney Lynette Labinger. The suit seeks a temporary restraining order barring the property owners from pursuing evictions against the tenants except for non-payment of rent. The suit also seeks an award of monetary damages to the plaintiffs, which is required by the state's anti-retaliation law, and attorneys' fees.

“With rents in Rhode Island skyrocketing and the supply of apartments, especially affordable apartments, at an all-time low, plaintiffs in this case, and other tenants of Elmwood Realty properties, have been presented with an illegal and impermissible ultimatum by their landlord: either forego exercising a right guaranteed to them by state law, or face eviction,” the attorneys wrote in a memorandum of law filed with the complaint.

A hearing on the request for a temporary restraining order will be held after the New Year.

It's unclear if Elmwood Realty or Butler have hired an attorney. Butler did not immediately return calls from the Globe seeking comment on Friday.

According to court documents obtained by the Globe, Butler also sent an email to all of his tenants that said "if you make a choice to engage with this Reclaim RI group, I will consider that you have now dissolved our relationship and when your tenancy is over, we will ask you to vacate."

In late October, one of Butler's agents with Elmwood Realty was accompanied by "several other men" who hand delivered a termination of tenancy notice to Esteven Rivera, a tenant who is one of the plaintiffs with his wife, Sylvia Rivera, who was speaking to Reclaim RI organizers. Rivera said he immediately showed the notice to his wife and they called both Reclaim RI and Pawtucket police to come to the house "because they felt intimidated after being approached by so many people," the court documents say.

When Rivera was handed the eviction notice, there was no member of the Rhode Island Sheriffs Department present, according a the police report written by responding patrol officer Alexander Campbell. Campbell also noted that when he looked at the eviction notice, it appeared to be a photocopied District Court form that did not have any stamp from a judge, as required by law.

Rivera, who has now been recruited as a "tenant leader" with Reclaim RI, continues to speak to his neighbors around the property about their issues with Elmwood Realty, according to court documents. However, the Riveras fear that if they are evicted "they will have nowhere to go" because their only source of income is Supplemental Social Security Insurance, court documents say, and "affordable apartments are extremely hard to find in the current housing market." The Riveras pay \$1,150 in monthly rent.

In another Elmwood Realty property in West Warwick, plaintiff and tenant Krystie Wood

began engaging with Reclaim RI in September over the “ongoing and unaddressed defects” in her unit, which she also reported to West Warwick Code Enforcement. On Nov. 7, a man Wood did not know who claimed to be from the fire department — but was not in uniform and did not provide any credentials — knocked on her door and asked to come in as four or five men waited outside on the street. Wood said she refused to allow him to enter, and she called Reclaim RI organizers, who met her in a car on the street. She watched, her attorneys claim in court documents, as Butler joined the men. When Wood returned to her unit, the same unidentified man returned to Wood’s door and said Butler “had instructed him to enter the apartment over” her objection, the ACLU claims. She turned him away again, and later that day, Elmwood Realty posted a 48-hour notice to enter her unit, and taped a termination of tenancy notice to her door. This notice also lacks a judge’s seal.

Wood “fears being evicted and fears that more groups of strangers may come to her dwelling unannounced,” the complaint filed in court Friday said. Wood pays \$1,700 in monthly rent.

Court documents say the four plaintiffs — which also includes tenant Jordan Towns — are each current on their rent.

Butler also allegedly threatened organizers with Reclaim RI, according to the ACLU. On Oct. 19, Butler [left a voicemail on the phone](#) of Representative Cherie Cruz, a Pawtucket Democrat who is also an organizer for Reclaim RI, where he warned her that any tenants associated with the group would be evicted.

“They have all been notified not to talk to you Reclaim RI pot smoking hippies,” Butler said in the voicemail to Cruz, which the ACLU provided [a recording](#) of to the Globe. “You are creating problems with these poor tenants, who didn’t do anything to deserve this and I’m gonna make sure everybody knows it. And I’m putting you on notice that you talk to my tenants, they give me your name and they will be evicted.”

Butler told Cruz in the voicemail that she and the other organizers were “only hurting tenants” and that he was adding a clause in the lease that would require his tenants to not speak to Reclaim RI organizers.

“You’re not licensed, you’re not educated, you’re not certified,” Butler told Cruz in the voicemail. “You guys are just a bunch of bums, running around haphazardly, causing problems.”

Butler also called Shana Crandall, who also works with Reclaim RI, and [left her a voicemail](#) on Oct. 19 where he said she was “creating homelessness” by speaking to his tenants.

Attorneys with the ACLU and Center for Justice said Butler’s retaliation is illegal.

“Our General Assembly has mandated that their action to challenge a failure to meet minimum housing requirements cannot lawfully be met with retaliation, including eviction,” said Labinger.

Alexa Gagosz can be reached at alexa.gagosz@globe.com. Follow her [@alexagagosz](#) and on Instagram [@AlexaGagosz](#).


 [Show comments](#)

EXHIBIT 7

**TRANSCRIPTION OF VOICEMAIL FROM JEFF BUTLER TO CHERIE CRUZ
OCTOBER 19 2023**

Hi, Cherie, very, very unprofessional voice mail message that you have on there, it doesn't say who you are, who I'm calling, but I know who you are and who I'm calling. This is Jeff Butler from Elmwood Realty and I just want to let you know if any time you talk to any of my tenants, the tenants are gonna get a 30 day notice to vacate the premises. They have all been notified not to talk to you Reclaim RI pot smoking hippies, OK, I've already told them all. I told them to go through the Rhode Island tenant handbook, learn the handbook, go by the law. You folks are not following the law, you're telling my tenants to not follow the law, which is also violating the terms of their lease.

So you are creating problems with these poor tenants, who didn't do anything to deserve this and I'm gonna make sure everybody knows it. And I'm putting you on notice that you talk to my tenants, they give me your name and they will be evicted. I have it in writing to my tenants, I'm putting no solicitation and no trespass notices on every one of my buildings as of today, so you now have that notice. You trespass, they will call the police and let them know that you're trespassing on my property.

So, I hope whatever you are trying to accomplish works for you, but right now you are only hurting tenants. You got two evicted last week, you got one evicted today. And all you do is emptying [sic] out my apartments and I clean them up and I re-rent them to somebody else. And now we're adding to the lease now not to talk to you folks. There's enough agencies that are sanctioned by the state that do the right thing. You folks are not doing the right thing. So why don't you just keep fighting your free pot and your free weed smoking and forget bothering and bullying landlords. I notice you're not going after the big corporations, you're going after the small landlords. Right? That's what bullies do, right? Bullies pick on the smaller people, so you guys are just bullies. You're not licensed, you're not educated, you're not certified. You guys are just a bunch of bums, running around haphazardly, causing problems.

Hi Shana Crandall this is Jeff Butler calling from Elmwood Realty. How ya doin? I understand that you are knocking on my tenants' doors and representing yourself as tenant agents, um and which you're not, okay. You have no credentials. You have no education. You have no certification. You don't work for the State of Rhode Island. So you're misleading my tenants. Um, I've notified my tenants that if you folks bother them and they let me know or you try to help them in any way which you're not, you're hurting them, that they will be asked to move out when their lease is up. Some are on month to month. So you're not helping the tenants at all, you're not advocating for them. You're causing problems because you're making them circumvent the legal system and the systems that are in place by the cities and the State from the inspections.

Okay, you guys might want to get familiar with the Rhode Island tenant landlord handbook. They have twenty days to notify me. If you were truly advocates you would be notifying me that there is a problem instead of taking pictures and sending them to the building inspectors.

So, you're causing problems where problems don't exist. You already caused two tenants to get evicted last week, another one this morning, and as my tenants call me up and I find out that you have spoken with them they all just got slapped [inaudible]. Okay so you are not doing anybody any favors—you are hurting people. You are actually creating homelessness.

So, that being said, you want to keep it up that's fine. I will just get new tenants in those places and my tenants know that if you show up to the properties, you're gonna, there's a no-solicitation order on the building and a no-trespass order for your Reclaim Rhode Island group of hippies, so I suggest you go away. Continue your pot smoking campaign—that seems to be getting you some mileage. So, I think I would work on that rather than making these poor tenants homeless.

EXHIBIT 8

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
PROVIDENCE, SC.

DISTRICT COURT
SIXTH DIVISION

ESTEVEN RIVERA, SYLVIA RIVERA,
JORDAN TOWNS, AND KRYSTIE WOOD

VS.

C.A. NO.: 6CA-2024-0134

JEFFREY BUTLER; ELMWOOD REALTY, LLC

AGREEMENT AND CONSENT ORDER

The Plaintiffs, Jordan Towns and Krystie Wood, and Defendants, Jeffrey Butler and Elmwood Realty, LLC, (hereinafter referred to as “The Parties”) agree as follows to resolve all issues not expressly reserved in this Agreement and Consent Order as to claims presented in the Verified Complaint and Motion for Restraining Order filed by and on behalf of tenants Towns and Wood:

1. Defendants Jeffrey Butler and Elmwood Realty, LLC and their related entity Elmwood Realty North, LLC, while expressly reserving the bases of any previous action for possession or eviction proceedings based upon the Notices of Termination of Tenancy issued to Jordan Towns as of the day of this Consent Order, shall not institute or maintain any action on the same until the resolution of claims made in the instant matter.
2. Plaintiff Jordan Towns and Defendants will work together to identify mutually agreeable times for access to the rental unit when renovation or repairs need to be performed in the rental unit.
3. Plaintiff Jordan Towns will not deny Defendants’ reasonable requests for access to his rental unit in compliance with the notice requirements of Landlord Tenant Act for purposes of addressing necessary repairs;
4. Defendants further agree that any Notice of Termination of Tenancy of Jordan Towns made as of the date of this Consent Order shall not be pursued, and Mr. Towns has complied with his obligation to allow access to his rental unit and is considered to be a tenant in good standing with the landlord as of the date of this Consent Order;
5. Defendants further agree that they shall not commence or pursue eviction proceedings against Jordan Towns either based upon him joining a tenant’s union or similar organization, or because the tenant has complained to a governmental agency charged with responsibility for enforcement of a building or housing code of a violation applicable to the premises materially affecting health and safety;

6. Defendants retain all statutorily created rights to institute or pursue eviction proceedings should the Plaintiff, Jordan Towns fail to comply with the terms of the rental agreement or the Rhode Island Landlord Tenant Act, or for any other legally meritorious reason;
7. Defendants Jeffrey Butler and Elmwood Realty, LLC and their related entity Elmwood Realty North, LLC, while expressly reserving the bases of any previous action for possession or eviction proceedings based upon the Notices of Termination of Tenancy issued to Krystie Wood as of the day of this Consent Order, shall not institute or maintain any action on the same until the resolution of claims made in the instant matter.
8. Plaintiff Krystie Wood and Defendants will work together to identify mutually agreeable times for access to the rental unit when renovation or repair needs to be performed in the rental unit.
9. Plaintiff Krystie Wood will not deny Defendants' reasonable requests for access to her rental unit in compliance with the notice requirements of the Landlord Tenant Act for the purposes of addressing necessary repairs.
10. Defendants further agree that they shall not commence or pursue eviction proceedings against Krystie Wood either based upon her joining a tenant's union or similar organization, or because the tenant has complained to a governmental agency charged with responsibility for enforcement of a building or housing code of a violation applicable to the premises materially affecting health and safety;
11. Defendants retain all statutorily created rights to institute or pursue future eviction proceedings should the Plaintiff, Krystie Wood fail to comply with either the terms of the rental agreement or the Rhode Island Landlord Tenant Act, or for any other legally meritorious reason;
12. Defendants agree to remove all notices from all rental properties owned and/or managed by the defendants and related entities under their control which instruct tenants that representatives from a tenants' union or similar organization are denied access to the property and/or state that the tenants' tenancies will be affected should they disregard the notices barring representatives from a tenants' union or similar organization.
13. Defendants acknowledge that it is legal and within their rights for tenants to speak with representatives from tenants' union or similar organization, and that it is legal and within their rights for tenants to invite representatives from a tenants' union or similar organization into their homes.

14. The execution of this Consent Order, by and through counsel, shall not be pled as an admission of liability on the part of any person, business entity or corporation identified herein;
15. The parties agree that this Consent Order does not resolve all the issues and claims presented in the instant litigation and expressly reserve resolution of claims pursuant to R.I.G.L. §34-18-34 and §34-18-46. Should the parties be unable to resolve these reserved issues the matter is set for hearing on February 29, 2024.

Plaintiffs
By their Attorneys,

/s/ Jennifer L. Wood
Jennifer L. Wood, Esquire (3582)
Samuel Cramer, Esquire (10290)
John Karwashan, Esquire (9516)
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jwood@centerforjustice.org
scramer@centerforjustice.org
jkarwashan@centerforjustice.org

Lynette Labinger, Esquire (1645)
128 Dorrance Street, Box 710
Providence, RI 02903
LL@labingerlaw.com

Date: February 2, 2024

ENTER: /s/ William J. Trezvant

Defendants
By their Attorney,

/s/ Robert P. Corrigan
Robert P. Corrigan, Esquire (4233)
HINES AND CORRIGAN, INC.
935 Jefferson Blvd., Suite 1004
Warwick, RI 02886
401-737-8900
401-737-8901 (fax)
rpcorrigan@hinesandcorrigan.com

PER ORDER:

/s/ Waleda Shepard

Date: 2/5/2024

EXHIBIT 9

RI POLITICS

Campaign contributions from controversial landlord now center of Cranston, R.I., mayoral race

Renters at 1890 Broad St., who recently formed a tenants union, have filed a temporary restraining order against their property's landlord, Elmwood Realty, which is managed by Jeffrey T. Butler

By [Alexa Gagosz](#) and [Edward Fitzpatrick](#) Globe Staff, Updated April 5, 2024, 2:14 p.m.



The property at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, Rhode Island, which is owned by Elmwood Realty and overseen by company manager Jeffrey T. Butler. ALEXA GAGOSZ/ GLOBE STAFF

CRANSTON, R.I. — In Cranston's hotly contested [Republican mayoral primary](#), Representative Barbara Ann Fenton-Fung on Friday called for Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins to redirect the campaign contributions he received from one of the city's controversial landlords.

Fenton-Fung was reacting to [a story in the Boston Globe](#) that detailed how renters at 1890 Broad St. had formed a tenants union after their landlord, Elmwood Realty LLC, had allegedly failed to deal with several maintenance issues that tenants say include a faulty heating system, rodent infestations inside their units, flooding, and other problems.

The front of the property, which once had a grassy courtyard, has become an open construction site, where a several-foot trench and dirty water stands in the way of several tenants' front doors. A dumpster and piles of dirt sit in the middle of the now grassless courtyard, strewn with trash, broken glass, and debris.

Jeffrey T. Butler is a top manager of Elmwood Realty LLC. And Hopkins has accepted \$1,700 from Butler since 2020, according to [campaign finance reports](#). The most recent contributions include \$500 on Dec. 28, 2023, and \$300 on April 28, 2023.



Cranston Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins HANDOUT

“When wondering how this is allowed to continue despite residents raising alarms, it’s notable that the landlord has become a frequent donor to Mayor Hopkins since he was running for, and became, mayor,” Fenton-Fung wrote.

“I’m calling on Mayor Hopkins to do the right thing and stand with neighbors instead of campaign donors, by giving the \$1,700 in campaign donations he has accepted from [Jeffrey] Butler to a housing-focused charity operating in Cranston,” she said.

Canton-Fung also called for Hopkins to provide a timeline for actions “to force the landlord to create safe and livable conditions for these residents.”



State Representative Barbara Ann Fenton-Fung, a Cranston Republican HANDOUT

In response, Hopkins issued a statement saying, “Mr. Butler has been a supporter of mine and I have no plans to return his contributions. My actions as mayor are never influenced by a political donation. This is just another desperate cry for attention by my primary opponent. When you have no genuine issues, you go to the playbook of misdirection and casting [aspersions] on people.”

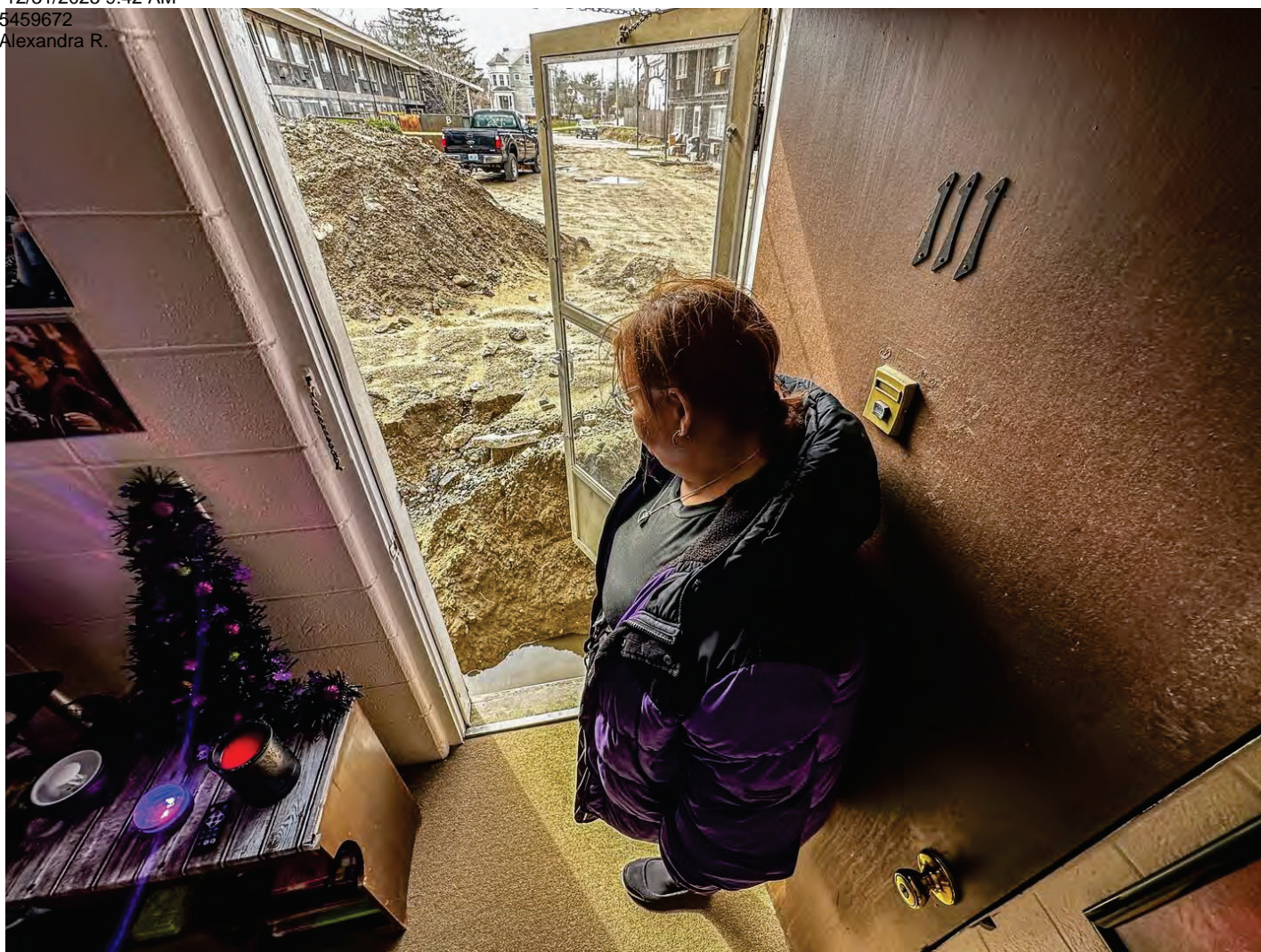
Hopkins said he has known Butler for many years as a businessperson and Cranston resident, and they’ve volunteered with the Rhode Island Special Olympics.

“I am very familiar with the Broad Street property because when serious structural issues developed under the previous owner, I spent weeks in my first year in the mayor’s office assisting tenants,” he said. “Mrs. Fenton-Fung was nowhere to be found while people like Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli and I were passing out meals to tenants in need.”

Hopkins said his administration is monitoring the work at 1890 Broad St. “While progress has been made, I know there is still work to be completed,” he said.

Butler did not immediately respond to the Globe’s request for comment. An unidentified receptionist at Elmwood Realty said there was no one in the office who could comment on the record, and she would not provide the name of the company’s attorney.

On Friday, three tenants filed temporary restraining orders against Elmwood Realty after they said the company has failed to properly address maintenance issues at the property.



Melissa Potter, 46, looks outside of her apartment's front door to what she calls a "moat" at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, R.I. ALEXA GAGOSZ/ GLOBE STAFF

"I've been living without heat for the last three days," said Melissa Potter, who is one of the tenants who filed the order in court. In an email sent on Friday morning at nearly 2 a.m., Butler told Potter that the company "inspected your hear and it is working fine." But Potter told the Globe her thermostat "hasn't reached above 60" degrees.

"I personally verified from the warm pipes going into your unit that the heat is fine," wrote Butler in the email, which was obtained by the Globe.

Some renters claimed Butler sends maintenance workers into their apartments without notice.

Kellee Silva, 24, said she was at work on March 25, when she received an alert from the camera she installed in her unit that someone had entered her home. She called the

police and the so-called intruders turned out to be maintenance workers. Butler wrote in an email to Silva that he was “not happy” with her for calling the police.

The news comes just a week after 10 renters at the property [formed a tenants union](#) through Reclaim R.I., a progressive tenants rights group. Organizers with Reclaim R.I. called it the first step to creating a statewide tenants union.

Representative Cherie L. Cruz, a Pawtucket Democrat who is also a Reclaim R.I. organizer, said tenants could negotiate the same way a labor union would, and can coordinate against against landlords such as withholding rent until certain maintenance issues are addressed.

About a week after Butler and Elmwood Realty were notified of the renters’ organizing efforts, tenants say the company and Butler have not acknowledged the union’s existence, or their requests for more urgency when dealing with maintenance and repair issues and transparency around ongoing construction. Many of the tenants also reported frequent rent increases, even as repair issues remained abundant and unresolved.

Cruz, who escorted the tenants to the courthouse on Friday, said Butler “could either meet the union at the table or at the courthouse.”

“He’s refused to work with his tenants,” said Cruz. “Now the law is going to force him to the table.”

Alexa Gagosz can be reached at alexa.gagosz@globe.com. Follow her [@alexagagosz](#) and on Instagram [@AlexaGagosz](#). Edward Fitzpatrick can be reached at edward.fitzpatrick@globe.com. Follow him [@FitzProv](#).



Show 10 comments

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EXHIBIT 10

HOUSING

Cranston, R.I., landlord and newly unionized tenants arrested after altercation during apartment inspection

One of the tenants had previously filed a restraining order against the landlord, Jeffrey T. Butler, who has had controversial interactions with tenants at other properties he manages

By [Alexa Gagosz](#) and [Edward Fitzpatrick](#) Globe Staff, Updated April 10, 2024, 11:12 a.m.



The property at 1890 Broad St. in Cranston, R.I. ALEXA GAGOSZ/ GLOBE STAFF

CRANSTON, R.I. — Four people were arrested Tuesday night for disorderly conduct at a Cranston apartment complex, including two tenants who live in the building and their landlord.

At 5:21 p.m., officers responded to a call about an incident at 1890 Broad St., and arrested [landlord Jeffrey T. Butler](#), 59; as well as Kellee Silva, 24; Eugene Vasquez, 21; and Robert Silva, 50, according to arrest logs.

Butler, who also lives in Cranston, is a top manager at Elmwood Realty LLC, the company that owns the property. Kellee Silva and Vasquez live together in one of the studio apartments on the property, and recently helped form a tenants union after Elmwood Realty allegedly failed address several [ongoing maintenance issues](#) while

raising some of the rents. Kellee Silva's father, Robert Silva, was also arrested during the incident.

Butler has not responded to multiple requests for comment by the Globe. In response to an email sent on Tuesday night, his lawyer, Robert P. Corrigan, told the Globe that he no longer represents Butler "in any capacity."

On Friday, three tenants, including Kellee Silva, filed temporary restraining orders against Elmwood Realty.

Melissa Potter, 46, said Butler inspected her apartment Monday night. She claimed Butler "got in my face" and, after Reclaim R.I. organizer Shana Crandell noted that the heat had not been working, Butler raised his voice and told her to "keep making your false statements." He then told Potter to tell her guest she "should shut her mouth." The encounter was [recorded and shared on social media](#).

E-Scoop@Melissap8577 · [Follow](#)

How professional of a landlord!! [@RITenantUnion](#)
[@steveahlquist](#) [@Thaoriginalgata](#) [@projo](#) [@AlexaGagosz](#)
[@reclaimri](#) [@Configa](#) make this go viral!! I CANNOT wait
til court April 16th...mind you this inspection was court
ordered



0:45 / 0:45

8:10 AM · Apr 9, 2024



10



Reply



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[Read more on X](#)

Butler was inspecting Silva's and Vasquez's apartment Tuesday night, according to the tenants who were arrested.

Representative Cherie L. Cruz, a Pawtucket Democrat who works as a tenant organizer for Reclaim R.I., told the Globe that she was on the property during the inspection.

During the inspection, Silva and Vasquez told him about problems with the water, broken windows, and a mice infestation. Butler began getting agitated and yelling at the tenants, Cruz said.

“He escalated,” she said. “He was yelling ‘You are the only ones who complain,’ and we know that’s a lie.” Several tenants have previously spoken to the Globe about maintenance and safety issues with their apartments.

Robert Silva stepped between his daughter and Butler, Cruz said. Butler twice tried to slap a phone out of Vasquez’s hand and then hit him in the mouth, at which point Kellee Silva began to cry, she said.

According to body camera footage obtained by the Globe on Wednesday, Vasquez and Kellee Silva reported marks on their arms where they were alleged to have been struck. Vasquez and Butler both had filmed the incident on their phones, and the videos were viewed by police.

Officer Thomas Lavey told all four parties that they “were acting disorderly” and that they would all be arrested.

“Although parties were pushing and shoving along with trying to knock phones out of each other’s hands no assault can be seen on camera from either view,” Lavey wrote in his incident report, which was obtained by the Globe. Lavey said each “could have walked away at any point during this incident.”

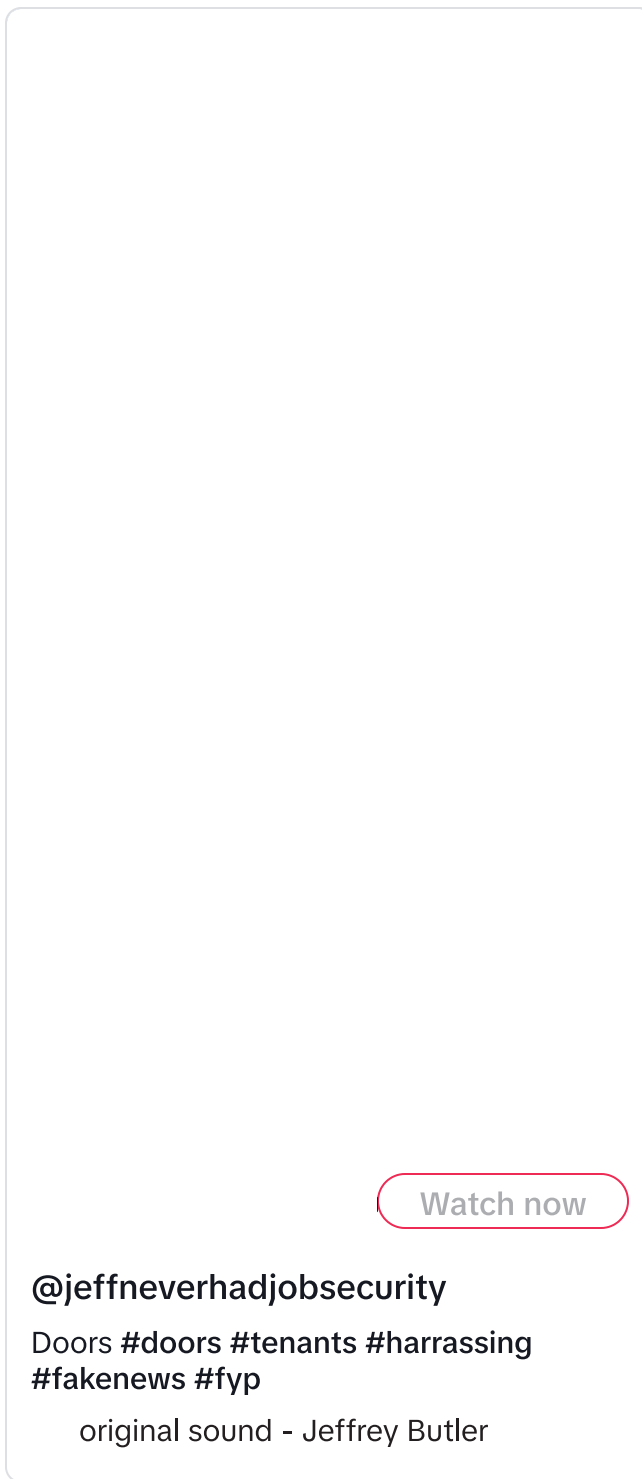
While Butler was being handcuffed, he encouraged onlookers to record him.

“It’s been very eventful,” said Butler. “Are you going to video me getting arrested? You can if you want... use your phone. I don’t care.”

Cruz said Butler began yelling at her, saying it was all Cruz's fault, and she told him he needed to fix the problems in the apartment.

"It just shouldn't be this difficult for a tenant to get something repaired," Cruz said. "They should not be met with aggression and retaliation."

Cruz said the two sides eventually agreed not to press charges against each other. But then a police sergeant arrived, saying he had seen a video of the incident and that everyone involved was going to be charged, she said. It was unclear what video the sergeant saw, but Cruz said that several people were recording the inspection. Butler also details issues with his tenants [on TikTok](#), where he has more than 227,000 followers.



Watch now

@jeffneverhadjobsecurity

Doors #doors #tenants #harrassing
#fakenews #fyp

original sound - Jeffrey Butler

In [a video posted on Tuesday afternoon](#) before the inspection, Butler filmed himself while walking around the property at 1890 Broad St.

“A couple of people commented on my TikTok that I seem a little unhinged because what’s going on with those tenants. But, no, I’m very hinged today,” said Butler in the video.

While spanning over the dirt-filled courtyard, Butler mocked tenants for [complaining about a trench in front of their front doors](#), which they have reported to the city as a safety hazard. He also mocked members of the press for publishing pictures of the property's conditions.

"They have a trench and they can't get out of their apartments. Those poor things," Butler said in the video.

In a [TikTok video](#) posted on Sunday, Butler said he was spending \$800,000 to renovate the property.

Cranston is in the middle of a hotly contested [Republican mayoral primary](#). On Friday, Representative Barbara Ann Fenton-Fung called for Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins to redirect the campaign contributions he received from Butler while also providing a timeline for actions "to force the landlord to create safe and livable conditions for these residents."

Hopkins has accepted \$1,700 from Butler since 2020, according to [campaign finance reports](#). The most recent contribution includes \$500 on Dec. 28, 2023. Hopkins told the Globe he had no plans to return his contributions, and that his actions as mayor are "never influenced by a political donation." Butler said in a [TikTok video](#) that he has been friends with Hopkins's family for more than three decades.

In a press release on Wednesday morning, Hopkins stated the city has issued violation notices to the Spring Street Realty, LLC, a subsidiary of Elmwood Realty.

"The fact is that prior to any of the recent publicity the Minimum Housing Department had been inspecting several apartments and issued violation notices against the landlord," said Hopkins.

According to Hopkins' press release, after a March 27 inspection the property owner was cited with two notices of violation of the State of Rhode Island Property Maintenance

Code The notices were sent on April 1, and the city demanded remediation of the various code issues.

The city will reinspect the property on April 22, Hopkins said.

“My understanding is that the owner has already addressed some of the violations,” Hopkins said. “We will insist that he continue to make progress on all identified areas of concern.”

This article has been updated with additional information from the police report.

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