



NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

Alex Maskey MLA  
Chair  
Committee for Social Development  
Room 284  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

23 October 2015

Dear Mr Maskey,

**Re: Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill (HMO)**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Human Rights Commission to provide advice on the Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill, in line with our statutory function under Section 69 (4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

We would like to welcome the Bill as a positive step towards improving housing conditions in Northern Ireland.

The Commission notes the purpose of the Bill is to enable better regulation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) by introducing a system of licensing and new provisions about standards of housing.

Housing conditions can have a huge impact on an individual's wellbeing. The United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognises "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family".<sup>1</sup> The Commission therefore welcomes the overall intention of the Bill to enable "better regulation" of houses in multiple occupation.

Whilst the Commission is supportive of any measures that seek to improve an individual standard of living, it would like to draw attention to

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<sup>1</sup> ICESCR, Article 11

Clauses within the Bill which would lead to the termination of a HMO license and therefore the eviction of tenants<sup>2</sup>.

We draw to the Committees attention to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) ICESCR General Comment 7, that "[a]ppropriate procedural protection and due process are essential aspects of all human rights but are especially pertinent in relation to a matter such as forced evictions."

In addition, ICESCR General Comment 7 on the right to adequate housing, the CESCR advises "[w]omen, children, youth, older persons, indigenous people, ethnic and other minorities, and other vulnerable individuals and groups all suffer disproportionality from the practice of forced eviction".

The Commission would be happy to meet with the Committee at any stage of the Bills progression, should it wish any further advice.

Yours sincerely,



Les Allamby  
**Chief Commissioner**

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<sup>2</sup> Houses in Multiple Occupation Bill "Revocation of Licences, Clause 23"