

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed members of the local council, fellow residents, and concerned citizens,

We stand before you today to address a pressing issue that affects the very fabric of our community—the deplorable state of student housing. Our educational institutions attract over a quarter of our city's population. However, the conditions in which these students live are simply unacceptable.

First and foremost, it has come to our attention that a substantial number- 68% of students in Bath- are living in accommodations where mould has become a persistent problem. This issue has the potential of leading to long-term respiratory problems alongside other health complications. 35% of students have reported worsened existing health problems, and 12% the development of new health issues. As a community that values the welfare of its residents, we cannot stand idly by while a third of Bath's population face such health hazards. Mould growth in student housing is often a result of poor ventilation, leaks, and inadequate maintenance. Students brave the elements in poorly insulated dwellings, facing cold winters and sweltering summers. These issues do not only affect the physical health of our students but also their mental well-being. 56% of students reported being miserable and 46% of them reported feeling depressed or anxious due to their housing condition. This creates an environment that is far from conducive to learning. To put this into numbers, 31% of them reported to have experienced negative effects on their learning due to their housing situation.

Cramped living conditions exacerbate the challenges our students face. It is disheartening to see them struggling to thrive in spaces that fail to provide the basic comfort and privacy that every individual deserves.

Moreover, the unresponsiveness of landlords to the grievances of their tenants is deeply troubling. The lack of accountability leaves students feeling powerless and neglected, as their legitimate concerns about living conditions fall on deaf ears. They often feel as if they had no say or leverage when it comes to their own housing situation- a service they are paying an exorbitant amount of money for. We demand a higher standard of care from those who profit from providing essential housing services to our students.

On top of that, accessibility is another critical aspect that demands attention. Our housing should be inclusive and cater to the diverse needs of our student population. These barriers prevent some students from fully participating in the academic and social life of our community due to inadequate infrastructure and accessibility features. 31% of students have reported that they can't invite family and friends over to their accommodation.

Our student population is vast and vibrant, but often quite separate from long-time residents. To strengthen that bond, collaboration is key. We'd like to picture a community where students enjoy free, warm, recreational spaces to foster that sense of belonging. By collaborating with universities, we tap into valuable insight that builds trust between students and residents. With a transparent and inclusive approach, not demanding excessive time or resources from the students who are often working over 20 hours a week (according to our recent survey) alongside their degrees, we hope to ensure our hard-working cohort feel heard and valued.

Let us work together to rectify these shortcomings and to create a community that values the well-being and future of every resident.

Thank you.