

CT Coalition Of Property Owners (CCOPO) Testimony in front of the Judicial committee

March 9th 2020

RE: Oppose HB5019 and SB403

The Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners (CCOPO) is one of Connecticut's largest landlord/property owner organizations. CCOPO has chapters in Enfield, Windham, Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport and Stamford, as well as the CT Association of Real Estate Investors (CAREI) in West Hartford. Our members own thousands of rental units throughout Connecticut, consisting of mostly small and medium sized landlords.

For over 20 years CCOPO has been a constructive voice for responsible landlords on such issues as: nuisance abatement, bedbugs and domestic violence. I am a full-time landlord myself and currently volunteer as the President of CCOPO.

OPPOSE: HB 5019 AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR FUTURES FOLLOWING ERASURE OF CRIMINAL RECORDS.

OPPOSE: SB 409 AN ACT CONCERNING THE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES, ERASURE OF CRIMINAL RECORDS FOR CERTAIN MISDEMEANOR AND FELONY OFFENSES AND PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ERASED CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD INFORMATION.

CCOPO understands the need to support the formerly incarcerated. Any proposed policies should not punish landlords who take reasonable steps and act in good faith to protect other innocent tenants, their families, and communities. The cost of legal fees in evictions and defending a discrimination actions involving landlords is particularly burdensome to small and medium landlords and should be considered when addressing this issue.

#1 Existing HUD guidelines already require that each landlord examine any applicant as a whole by not automatically discarding such applicants with a misdemeanor or a felony on their record. CCOPO recommends that property owners make good faith decisions based on:

- The severity of the crime and the possibility that it would affect the other tenants if repeated
- The underlying facts resulting in conviction. - How long ago the criminal act occurred.

Any new bill should mirror the HUD guidelines as closely as possible.

Quite frankly most landlords don't care about minor possession charges from few years ago or most minor single event crimes. Their main concern is being able to identify a pattern of behavior if repeated could pose a danger to others or harm the property. Since we cannot see into the hearts of formerly incarcerated persons, evidence of good behavior after release from incarceration is the only criteria, we as landlords can assess and is critical to protecting many innocent young and or disabled existing tenants. By erasing records, **the ability to see patterns of behavior will be eliminated and the public safety will be at risk.**

#2 If either of these two proposed bills pass, will it be considered an O.K. form the State of CT to turn down a rental applicant who has any visible (non-erased) criminal record? These bills may be in conflict with HUD guidelines by drawing a severity class of crime or a time frame that is automatically eligible for denial of housing.

I would be happy to answer questions that you may have.

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