
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6529

AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING AUTHORITIES.

SUMMARY

This bill (1) establishes background check requirements for housing authority employees (§ 1), and (2) imposes an annual auditing requirement on housing authorities (§ 3). These requirements apply to local and regional housing authorities and the Connecticut Housing Authority, if it operates as a housing authority. (In practice, only local housing authorities are subject to the bill's provisions.)

The bill requires (1) existing housing authority commissioners to participate in federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) commissioner training by January 1, 2022, and (2) new commissioners to participate in the training upon appointment (§ 1).

Finally, the bill also requires housing authorities receiving state assistance and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (if it or its subsidiaries are successor owners to housing previously owned by a local authority) to annually provide tenants, beginning when they sign their initial lease, (1) contact information for the authority's management, local public health department, and Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, and (2) a notice of tenant rights (§ 2).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2021

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Beginning October 1, 2021, this bill requires housing authority employees to undergo a State Police Bureau of Identification state and national criminal background check. The bill adopts similar requirements for employees hired by housing authorities after that date by requiring them to submit to the background check prior to

starting work. However, the bill limits how a housing authority may use this information in the hiring process. Specifically, a housing authority may only refuse to hire an applicant after conducting a good faith individualized assessment and considering whether:

1. a substantial nexus exists between an applicant's criminal history and the job he or she applied for;
2. substantial evidence exists that the applicant has not been rehabilitated; and
3. insufficient time has elapsed since the applicant's criminal history.

ANNUAL AUDIT

The bill requires local housing authorities to annually contract with an independent certified public accountant for a financial audit. The audit results must be included in an authority's annual report that existing law requires it to submit to the housing commissioner and the chief executive officer of the municipality where it is located. Existing law already requires the (1) housing commissioner to ensure local housing authorities are audited biennially and (2) authority to cover the audit's costs, if the commissioner requires it (CGS § 7-392(d)).

Additionally, under the State Single Audit Act, housing authorities must audit themselves if they (1) have annual revenue of more than \$1 million and (2) spend more than \$300,000 in a fiscal year (CGS § 4-231).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Housing Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 11 Nay 4 (03/11/2021)