

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5205

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR RENT COMMISSIONS.

Vote Date: 3/10/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/1/2022

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.

Rep. Christine Palm, 36th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Municipalities currently can create fair rent commissions to control and eliminate excessive rental charges and carry out certain landlord-tenant statutes. But most towns in CT do not have fair rent commissions. This legislation seeks to increase the number of CT residents covered by a fair rent commission by requiring that municipalities above a certain size create a fair rent commission.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE: (LCO 3073) The population for when municipalities must establish a fair rent commission was 14,000 in the original bill. The substitute language raised this threshold to 25,000.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities](#) **Supports** – stating "Given the current real estate market, many low-income people, who are disproportionately families with children, senior citizens, and, due to systemic inequities, people of color, are finding themselves priced out of the market. Housing rental rates are at an all-time high. Fair rent commissions, which are often the only practical way for tenants to challenge rent increases, would help to stabilize the cost of rentals and allow more people into the market... By requiring that these commissions be created in our larger towns, this bill recognizes that fighting against excessive rental fees is a responsibility we all share. "

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Raphael Podolsky and Catharine Freeman](#), [CT Legal Services](#) **Supports** – stating that tenants have no practical way to challenge rent increases unless they live in a town with a fair rent commission. This legislation significantly increases the number of residents who will be able to challenge extraordinary rent increases.

[Maurine Crouch](#) **Supports** – stating that evictions are a public health hazard and that with rising rents we will see an increase in evictions. She believes that this legislation will decrease the number of evictions.

[Amy Eppler-Epstein](#), [Attorney-New Haven Legal Assistance](#) **Supports** – stating that their experience with the New Haven Fair Rent commission is that these commissions can be fair and easy to use for both tenants and landlords. She supports the expansion of these commissions to more towns.

[Kathleen Flaherty](#), [Executive Director-CT Legal Rights Project](#) **Supports** – stating that "Increasing the number of fair rent commissions around the state would enable more tenants in more towns to have a way to challenge unfair rent increases."

[Sara Prael](#), **Supports** – stating that "Rents are rising across the country, including here in CT and Fair Rent Commissions are the only practical tool we have available to keep housing affordable"

[Kyle Wark](#), **Supports** – stating that "Tenants that are living in cities or towns that have a Fair Rent Commission have a practical form of advocating for themselves on the matter of rent increases or obtaining a freeze or reduction in rent. Fair Rent Commissions should be required in our larger cities and towns so that tenants can be equally protected from unfair rent increases."

[Sarah White](#), [CT Fair Housing Center](#) **Supports** – stating that this legislation will give tenants "a practical mechanism to stop unconscionable rent increases or rent payments". This legislation is especially important now, when CT has been experiencing substantial rent increases.

[Dave Delohery](#), [CT Mobile Homeowner's Alliance](#), **Supports** – stating that residents of mobile homes are uniquely vulnerable to predatory corporations buying the land their homes occupy, as it costs mobile home owners a substantial amount of money to tow their mobile homes. They support fair rent commissions as a way to give tenants in mobile home parks more leverage over the park owners.

[Alexander Kolokotronis](#), **Supports** – stating that CT currently has large gaps in tenant protection based on if your municipality has a fair rent commission, and this will help address this.

[Andrew Wilcox](#), [Madeline Batt](#), [Todd Sample](#) [Connecticut Tenants Union](#) members **Supports** – stating that their experiences with fair rent commissions show that they can prevent unfair rent increases and prevent exploitation.

[Joseph Glennon](#), **Supports**

[Stacey Faircloth-Punza](#), **Supports**

[Patricia Ross](#), **Supports**

[Affordable Housing Commission of the City of New Haven](#) **Supports**

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Adrienne Angel](#) **Opposes**- stating that these eviction restrictions fall to heavily on private owners who are just trying to survive and provide affordable housing.

[CT Realtors](#) **Opposes**- stating that this is an unfunded mandate for cities and towns.

[Adam Bonoff](#) **Opposes**- stating that "fair rent commissions unfairly restrict the free market, do not consider inflation as to costs, contribute to blight."

[Betsy Gara](#), Executive Director-COST, **Opposes**- stating that a blanket mandate to adopt fair rent commissions is not necessary because towns can make these decisions on their own. And that "Fair Rent Commissions may further discourage such property owners from making rental properties available, decreasing the number of units available in communities."

[Francis Pickering](#), Executive Director-WestCOG **Opposes**- stating that this legislation could create a liability for towns by compelling personal appearance and testimony, like that of a court. Commissions are required to retain legal counsel and that could come at expense of local governments. Instead, there should be a statewide hearing and adjudication process rather than putting this onto towns.

[Zachary Mckeon](#), Senior Legislative Assoc.-CCM **Opposes**- raising concerns that not all the towns required to have a fair rent commission will have many renters, have excessive rent charges, or have the municipal capacity, staff and financial resources to create and operate a commission.

[Lin Yang](#) **Opposes**- stating that there is no evidence that the existing fair rent commissions have successfully kept rents low for the residents that they serve, and therefore they should not be expanded.

[Robert Jackson](#), **Opposes**

Reported by: William Cromwell

Date: 3/21/2022