

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6666

Title: AN ACT EXPANDING RENTERS' RIGHTS.

Vote Date: 3/2/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/23/2023

File No.: 183

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Governor Ned Lamont
The Housing Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This Bill seeks to expand already existing protections for Connecticut residents. It seeks to lower the maximum amount of money a landlord can collect from tenants as a security deposit from two month's rent to a maximum amount of one month's rent. It has been noted in testimony that certain individuals cannot afford a two months' rent security deposit, as they are unlikely to see this money again. Second, it also seeks to raise the maximum fine upon which can be issued to a landlord for housing violations from \$250 to \$1,000. This raise comes as \$250 fine was found to be insufficient incentive for landlords to fix dangerous and costly housing violations. And finally, it also seeks to expand the protection of renters based upon sexual orientation to owner occupied buildings consisting of 1-4 units.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Office Of the Governor, Governor, Ned Lamont: Governor Lamont showed strong support for all aspects of this piece of legislation. He stated that it can be extremely difficult for individuals to garner more than one month's rent, for ultimately an amount of money that will most likely not be returned and believes that it would be of extreme benefit to renters while being of little inconvenience to landlords. Secondly, the governor is also in favor of municipalities charging more for serious housing violations as \$250 would be of little inconvenience to the landlords. Thirdly they firmly believe that sexual orientation is wrong in any setting, in any place, in a building of any size.

State of CT Department of Housing, Commissioner Department of Housing, Seila Mosquera-Bruno: Seila Mosquera-Bruno supports the passage of this bill, believing that

unnecessarily high security deposits or sexual orientation should not be a roadblock to acquiring housing. Discrimination based on any person's identity is intolerable, especially in pursuit of basic human needs such as housing.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

ACLU-CT, Policy Counsel, Jess Zaccagnino: Ms. Zaccagnino expressed her support for this legislation reiterating the problem of tenants being unable to pay a security deposit worth several months' rent. She also states that, all people in Connecticut have a right to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

CT Legal Rights Project, Executive Director, Kathleen Flaherty: Ms. Flaherty issued and encouraged the committee to support this bill citing her staunch support for establishing civil penalties for landlords and removing the limitation of owner-occupied buildings for state fair housing protections.

Connecticut Voices for Children, Legislative Coordinator, Eli Sabin: Mr. Sabin indicates that raising the maximum fine for housing code violations from \$250 to \$1,000 will protect tenants and increase accountability for landlords who do not keep their properties in safe and sanitary conditions. The value of the \$250 maximum fine has eroded greatly due to inflation since it was established in 2003, and we should allow municipalities to raise the fine to protect tenants and enforce our housing codes.

Private Citizen, Ian McDonald: Mr. McDonald cited his support for HB-6666 stating how his mother used worked in public schools for 37 years would express her sorrow of the tremendous challenge that faced children with housing insecurity. Mr. McDonald believes that the HB-6666 still provides adequate power to the landlords and allows for them to still earn a hefty profit.

The following individuals submitted testimony in support of HB-6666.

Diana Bisson
Mariana Pelaez
Alexander Petals
Black and Brown United in Action

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

CT Property Owners Alliance, President, Bob De Cosmo: Mr. De Cosmo Issues his staunch opposition to both sections one and two of this Bill. Citing the problems with section one by claiming that between damages and an eviction process the costs far exceed two months' security deposit, and the now decreased cost of the security deposit will have to be mitigated by increasing the new tenants rent. Citing his problems with section two Mr. De Cosmo states that individuals will be notified of eviction only to have them call code enforcement and charge the landlord for damages.

CT Apartment Association, President, Kelly DeMatteo: Ms. DeMatteo opposes section one of this piece of legislation stating how security deposits are a tool upon which landlords can use to mitigate risk and approve more tenants.

LICO Group Corporation, President and CEO, Brian Liistro: Mr. Liistro states that he opposes this bill as written. He opposes the decrease of the security deposit maximum. The additional security deposit allows housing providers to accept applicants who would not have qualified under the standard one-month deposit requirement. We do support the increase of the municipality fines and the removal of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Private Citizen and Landlord, Sarah Burnham: Ms. Burnham Cites her experience with a recent individual that was evicted citing that the loss is in the thousands of dollars and that it will never be able to be recouped. She also states that if security deposits are only one month's rent, renters will quite simply stop paying last month's rent as it is not worth the process of beginning the eviction process. She suggests that the security deposits be increased to 3 months' rent, or the eviction process needs to be a much faster process.

The following individuals submitted testimony in opposition of HB-6666.

Michael Batista
Marvis Brown
Valentine Cayo
MaryAnn Ciambriello
Kelly DeMatteo
Brian Edwards
Scott Ferguson
Rob Jackson
Liliane Lamm
David Landau
Shuly Lieber
Marnie McKay
August Miller
Morgan Miller
Jennifer Miranda
Joseph Mollica
George Paiva
Joseph Piatti
Tara Ramlal
Max Rickis
Charles Sussman
Lauren Tagliatela
Mark Troiano
Melinda Tuhus
Topher Jackson

Reported by: Thomas Togneri

Date: March 10, 2023

