



THE CONNECTICUT APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

SB 54 AN ACT CONCERNING A LANDLORD'S ABILITY TO REVIEW CRIMINAL RECORDS
RELATING TO A PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

HB 5712 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT CLEAN SLATE LAW.

HB 5713 AN ACT CONCERNING INQUIRIES ABOUT THE CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS OF A
PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

Housing Committee Public Hearing
02.07.19

Dear Senator Bradley, Representative McGee, and Ranking Members Senator Hwang and
Representative Dauphinais and Members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Kevin Santini and I am submitting testimony representing the Connecticut Apartment Association (CTAA). CTAA represents over 50,000 units, the largest number of apartments represented by any single association in the state. CTAA members consist of the state's leading firms in the multifamily rental housing industry, many of whom manage national portfolios. The association's mission is to actively lead the apartment industry in providing quality housing by educating, advocating and connecting property owners, managers and vendor partners. Our parent organization, the National Apartment Association (NAA), represents more than 9.2 million apartment homes throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

I would like to address the following bills in my testimony:

SB 54

HB 5712

HB 5713

My family owns and manages over 1200 rental apartments and townhomes in Vernon and Ellington.

First, even though it's unrealistic, we want to approve every resident application we receive. We want to rent apartments as quickly as possible and keep our vacancies as low as possible. However, we have to temper that excitement to rent units with a realistic analysis of every application we receive. You can't approve or deny an applicant based on the snapshot view of their background, you have to analyze each application, perhaps ask for more detailed information about problems with the application, and sometimes meet with the applicant again to discuss the application.

Criminal history can be much more difficult than credit history when reviewing an application, because there are various criminal acts that occur in various situations that can be difficult to interpret on paper. But what's on paper is the best source for our application decision- there's nothing more reliable than the track record of the applicant.

Gun, violent, or child abuse crimes by any applicant makes approval very challenging, regardless of how long ago it was. Landlords have a responsibility to all of their residents to create a safe environment. When I struggle to make a final decision on an applicant with a criminal history, I ask myself if I could look in the eyes of the neighbors and tell them I feel strongly that this applicant will not be a threat to them, their family, or their neighbors.

In 2017, HUD updated their screening policy to partly clarify the following:

- You cannot automatically deny all applicants with a criminal history
- You cannot deny an applicant based on an arrest that didn't end up as a conviction
- You must treat all comparable criminal histories the same and without discriminating against any group
- Landlords are expected to distinguish between criminal history that creates a risk to resident safety and criminal conduct that does not.

I agree and comply with these guidelines and I believe CTAA membership does as well.

More specifically with regards to each bill, I believe they all need substantial clarifications:

- Senate Bill #54 does not establish a specific look back period which is necessary. In addition, the landlord should be given flexibility (as HUD has given us) when evaluating different crimes.
- With HB #5712, there should be more detail than 'certain felony offenses' so we clearly understand the rules of reviewing an application.
- With HB #5713, I'm unclear on when we would make an offer of housing or conditional offer of housing relative to a criminal background check.

I understand and appreciate the importance of giving prospective residents with a criminal background a second chance with housing opportunities, but much more work has to be done on the details of these bills. I also believe that the HUD guidelines that are already in place give landlords a very clear picture of the rules they need to follow when reviewing resident applications.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to on this issue.

Sincerely,



Kevin W. Santini
Property Manager/Owner
Santini Entities