

# Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5844

AN ACT REQUIRING HOUSING AUTHORITIES TO PROVIDE VOTER  
**Title:** REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS TO PROSPECTIVE TENANTS.

**Vote Date:** 3/7/2019

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/7/2019

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Housing Committee

Rep. Brandon McGee, 5th Dist.,

Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.,

Rep. Geraldo Reyes, 75th Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Voting in the United States has become an obstacle with multiple barriers such as voter registration. As a democracy, voter registration should not be an obstacle to voting. This bill would require housing authorities to provide voter registration applications to prospective tenants to increase registration amongst voters in Connecticut.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None stated.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

Karen DuBois-Walton, PhD, Executive Director, New Haven Housing Authority; supports the bill, sharing that New Haven Housing Authority became the first Connecticut Public Housing Authority to create an automatic voter registration for all new residents of Housing Developments and Voucher holders. It was expressed that the connection between residency and voter registration, partnering with affordable housing providers would make sense.

Kathleen Flaherty, Esq., Executive Director, CT Legal Rights Project, Inc.; supports the intent of this bill, stating that the legislature should support people in exercising their right to vote but expresses concern that “prospective tenants” does not necessarily mean a lease is being signed and prospective tenants may never end up living in that housing authority’s jurisdiction, creating confusion. A suggestion was made that upon execution of a lease, the tenant be asked if they would like to register to vote, and then materials be provided to them.

David McGuire, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut; supports this bill, stating that the right to vote is a fundamental right in the United States, and requiring housing authorities to provide voter registration applications to prospective tenants would strengthen the United States’ democracy and give more people access to the materials they need to becoming registered voters.

Raphael L. Podolsky, Public Policy Advocate, CT Legal Services; supports this bill, stating that it would provide the same concept that led to “motor voter” registration at the Motor Vehicle department, the use of special assistant registrars for door-to-door registration campaigns and the availability of voter registration forms at government offices. It was also stated that cities around the United States require all landlords, not just housing authorities, to provide tenants with voter registration forms.

Yvonne Senturia, Election Law Specialist, League of Women Voters of Connecticut, Inc.; supports this bill, stating that the political process must be open to all citizens, and the expansion of opportunities for registration of potential voters via applications provided by housing authorities is beneficial to those new to voting and those previously registered who have recently moved within the state.

The following submitted testimony in **support** of HB 5844 supporting the intent to require housing authorities to provide voter registration to prospective tenants:

Andrew G. Osmun, Board Member, One Standard of Justice, Inc.; supports this bill.

Cindy Prizio, Executive Director, One Standard of Justice; supports this bill.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None stated.

**Reported by: Zoë Gluck**

**Date: 3/14/19**