

# Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-693

AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR A

**Title:** VICTIM OF FAMILY VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT.

**Vote Date:** 4/10/2019

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 4/1/2019

**File No.:** 833

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Judiciary Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Introduced by Senator Flexer and Rep. Haddad to increase safety for a victim of family violence or sexual assault when an order of protection has been issued by a civil or criminal court.

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

**Connecticut Commission on Women Children and Seniors and the Commission on Equity and Opportunity Executive Director Steven Hernandez** testifies that in domestic violence cases a restraining order may not be enough. Hernandez notes that SB 693 is an important measure to protect a victim from a perpetrator and from intrusion and potential further violence.

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

**Connecticut Legal Services, Raphael Podolsky** testified that this bill outlines the responsibilities of both the landlords and the tenants when a protective or restraining order is issued by the courts and victims request a lock change from the landlord. Podolsky notes that this bill is critical for survivors of domestic violence who have obtained a protective or restraining order. Podolsky outlines the timeline and requirements in the bill.

**Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence Executive Director Lucy Nolan** provided testimony that this bill would ensure survivors of sexual violence who have restraining orders or civil protection orders and are dependent on landlords would have the right to make their

homes safe. Nolan also notes that victims of sexual and domestic violence are particularly vulnerable to experiencing additional acts of violence and this bill is important to protecting their right to be safe in their home. Nolan also notes that the bill offers further protection to survivors by mandating that landlords shall not provide a key or access to respondents of protective or restraining orders that reside in the dwelling.

**Susan B. Anthony Project, Inc. Executive Director Jeanne S. Fusco** testified that under current law there is nothing that requires a landlord to change the locks at the request of a tenant when their safety is threatened. Fusco notes that many survivors have had such requests denied by landlords and that for a survivor who has been granted a protective order it can be frightening to know that their abuser still has access to their home. Fusco notes that several states already have laws requiring lock changes for survivors in certain circumstances.

**Women's Center of Greater Danbury Legislative Liaison/Director of Education and Training Ann Rodwell-Lawton** testifies that requiring landlords to change locks in these limited circumstances can have a significantly positive impact of what is a traumatic time for the tenant. Roswell-Lawton also notes that several states already have laws requiring lock changes for survivors under certain circumstances.

**Women's Support Services Domestic Violence Intervention & Prevention Executive Director D. Elizabeth Mauro** provides testimony that similarly notes that this bill offers several protections to victims of sexual or domestic violence who have obtained a restraining order including mandating a landlord to change the locks in a dwelling within two days. Mauro further notes that there is nothing in current Connecticut law that requires a landlord to change the locks at the request of a tenant who feels unsafe. Mauro also notes that this bill would mandate that landlords will not provide a key or access to a dwelling unit shared with a respondent of a training order.

**Interval House Legislative Liaison Penni Micca** offered testimony that enumerated reasons that a perpetrator may enter the home of a victim including, entering while a tenant is home, and removing important papers and personal items, or creating fear in a victim by letting them know that they can access them at any time. Micca also further notes that countless victims have shared stories of being afraid to go home, barricading themselves in with furniture, or sleeping in front of a door to protect their children.

**Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund Policy Manager Madeline Granato and MSW Intern Alisha Soto** provided testimony urging the committee to pass SB 693. The bill require landlords, at the cost of the tenant, to change the locks on the individual dwelling unit of a survivor of domestic violence or sexual violence when they have a court-issued restraining order, protective order, or a civil protection order. The testimony notes that this bill will align Connecticut with other states that have passed lock change laws for limited circumstances in cases of domestic or sexual violence.

**Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence Director of Policy and Communications Liza Andrews** notes that SB 693 is a CCADV priority bill. Andrews notes that this bill provides a meaningful measure of safety and peace of mind for victims without creating an unnecessary burden on landlords.

**United Services, Inc., Shauna Harrington** notes the protections in the bill for both the tenant and the landlord. Harrington urges the passage of the bill so that Connecticut can join the several states that currently have lock change laws for victims of domestic violence or sexual violence under certain circumstances.

**Safe Futures Inc, Melissa Zaitchik** urges the passage of the bill to provide protection to victims of domestic violence or sexual violence who have obtained a court order. Zaitchik also notes that several other states, including Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Washington DC have laws requiring lock change for survivors under certain circumstances.

**The Center for Family Justice** provided testimony noting that the bill will require landlords to change the locks of an individual dwelling unit of a survivor of domestic violence when they have a court-issued restraining or protective order, or civil protection order. The testimony further notes that there is nothing in current Connecticut law that requires a landlord to change the locks of a tenant that feels unsafe. The testimony urges Connecticut to join the states that already have lock change laws for victims of sexual violence or domestic violence that have court-issued restraining, protective or civil orders.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None provided.

**Reported by: Bobbye Knoll Peterson**

**Date: 5/2/2019**