

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5125

AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY OF RENTAL RATES FOR TENANTS

Title: RECEIVING RENTAL ASSISTANCE.

Vote Date: 3/5/2020

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/18/2020

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Housing Committee -

REASONS FOR BILL:

There is a need for payment standard transparency for housing voucher programs. Government housing vouchers are a critical tool to help families avoid homelessness and gain housing stability. There are 45 housing authorities that administer federal housing vouchers in Connecticut, all have the discretion to set the maximum apartment rent in which a voucher may be used. This information is not necessarily publicly available and certainly not in one place. It is often very difficult for voucher holders wishing to move out of the municipality where their voucher is issued, including families wishing to move to higher opportunity areas to do so.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None stated.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Erin Boggs - Executive Director of the Open Communities Alliance (OCA) – 75 Charter Oak Avenue, Suite 1-210 • Hartford, CT 06106 - supports - stating a proposal requiring housing authorities to post the value of their vouchers on their websites and submit them to 211 for publication within 30 days of their issuance. HUD sets baseline values for vouchers of different bedroom sizes that can vary by town and zip code. Housing authorities are then permitted to go up to 10% above or below this baseline. Therefore, only a local housing authority knows how it is valuing its vouchers, and this information is sometimes not available on the housing authority's website and is not collected in any centralized location. This bill

proposes that such information be published on a housing authority's website and submitted to 211 for centralized publication within 30 days of issuance. This will allow voucher families the ability to shop for units equipped with full information about the value of their voucher in different areas.

Kiley Gosselin – Executive Director – Partnership For Strong Communities – 227 Lawrence Street, Hartford, CT 06106 – supports and states that by providing low-income households with basic information about the maximum allowable rents by unit allows those households to more quickly and better identify units that meet their own needs within the restrictions of their voucher. This will reduce the likelihood that households are unable to use a voucher within the time limits provided by the housing authority, risking loss of that voucher.

Erin Kemple – Executive Director – CT Fair Housing Center – supports – and states that to often the Center hears from voucher holders that they would like to move to another community but do not know the fair market rent in effect there. This prevents many people from moving to a location with high performing schools, or communities where their jobs are located, or places with access to fresh food and safe outdoor spaces. Mobility for all voucher holders will be improved as well.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Stated.

Reported by: Karen Godbout

Date: 03/06/2020