

# Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5126

AN ACT CONCERNING INSPECTIONS OF RENTAL PROPERTY PRIOR TO OCCUPANCY OR TERMINATION, LATE RENTAL PAYMENTS AND

**Title:** DESIGNATION OF A RENTAL HOUSING OMBUDSMAN.

**Vote Date:** 3/10/2020

**Vote Action:** JFS To Floor

**PH Date:** 2/18/2020

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Rep. Ritter, M. 001

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill is necessary to provide housing stability and rent protection for tenants by permitting tenants to request an inspection of rental property prior to occupancy and after notice of termination of a tenancy. This would help prevent disputes regarding the condition of the unit at the beginning and end of the tenancy. This bill would also cap late fees for rental payments and create a Rental Housing Ombudsman with the Department of Housing.

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

*Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Commissioner of the Department of Housing, Hartford:* The DOH is **opposed to sec. 3 of HB-5126**. Mosquera-Bruno states that the information that would be required to be collected and analyzed would require much more funding and many more staff than the DOH currently has.

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

*Raphael Podolsky, Public Policy Advocate for Connecticut Legal Services, New Britain:* Podolsky explains that his organization **supports HB-5126 with changes**. Podolsky believes that Section 1 of the bill would work better if the language was changed so inspections would occur after a tenant has removed all their belongings out of a dwelling. Podolsky is also concerned that the language under Section 2, he is concerned that the 10% cap on late fees is excessive, and that there is nothing stopping landlords from charging late fees on late fees or using current rent payment for the late fee rather than the current rent. He does support a

cap on late fees but would like to work further on the language of Section 2. Podolsky states that he supports Section 3 as written.

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

Carrie Rowley, Co-Chair of Government Relations of the Connecticut Property Association: Rowley states that Section 1, regarding inspections, is unnecessary. She states that during her career she has never heard of an inspection not being conducted before a tenant moves into a dwelling. She also voiced that Section 2 does not consider the cost of collecting rent, and that a late fee is not a punishment for not paying rent, but compensation for the landlord due to fees on the landlord's part.

Jim Perras, CEO of Home Builders and Remodelers Association, South Windsor: Perras **opposes the bill as it currently stands** but would support the bill if section 2 and mention of late fees were removed from the bill's language. He states that the bill would remove enforcement to pay bills on time by allowing tenants to be late paying rent with no repercussions.

The following people are **opposed to HB-5126** because they believe that it would establish government control over their businesses, along with allowing tenants to extort money away from the landlords and there will be no deterrent to late payment.

Michael Batista, Resident, Waterbury

Adam Bonoff, Resident

Allison Bonoff, Resident, Easton

Sandra Borducci, Property Owner

Michael Cervellino, Landlord, Waterbury

Pete D'Amato, Property Owner, Woodbury

Shirish Dhume, Resident, Cheshire

Richard Dubina, Resident, Chaplin

David Epstein, Landlord

Naomi Freeman, Landlord

Kevin Harris, Landlord

Diane Jones, Broker, Brookfield

Lucien Laliberty, Brooker, Danielson

Peter Lucchese, Broker

Robert Makas, Resident

Marie Matta-Isona, Realtor, East Haven

Jeffery Mita, Landlord

Rudy O'Neil, Landlord, New Britan

Yashesh Parikh, Landlord, Rocky Hill

Denise Robillard, Landlord, Jewett City

Eric Rodgers, Landlord

John Souza, President of the Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners

Cheryl Reynolds, Landlord, Chester

The following people have voiced **opposition to HB-5126**.

Guihong Cui, Resident, New Britan

Rich Pavlik, Real Estate Agent

Filipe Pereira, Resident

Raj Pillai, Resident

Lantha Rams, Property Owner

Steven Iovanna, Landlord, Meriden

Kalidas Sukumaran, Landlord

Sean Toomey, Resident

**Reported by: Dalton Mongeau**

**Date: 03/10/2020**