AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RIGHT TO HOUSING.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (Effective October 1, 2021) (a) It shall be the goal of this state to progressively implement policies that will respect, protect and fulfill a right to affordable, decent, safe and stable housing for every resident of this state.

(b) Each state agency, as defined in section 1-79 of the general statutes, and each political subdivision of the state, in implementing the provisions of this section, shall:

(1) Consider the right to housing under subsection (a) of this section and the components of such right set forth in subsection (c) of this section when adopting or revising policies, regulations or grant criteria that implicate, impact or affect such right.

(2) When implementing such policies, regulations or grant criteria, give priority to assisting households with incomes below fifty per cent of the area median income, as described in section 8-39a of the general statutes.
(3) To the extent practicable, attempt to serve households currently experiencing homelessness or at risk of housing loss and those in the lower range of the income group to which the agency's or political subdivision's programs are directed.

(c) The right to housing includes, but is not limited to, the following components:

(1) The right to protection from housing loss: This right implicates such governmental programs as those ensuring the legal security of persons and households at risk of losing housing or experiencing homelessness, including eviction prevention programs, legal assistance in evictions, financial assistance, support services and problem-solving counseling.

(2) The right to safe housing that meets all basic needs: This right implicates the internal habitability of the home as well as the necessary services and infrastructure to support a healthy and dignified standard of living.

(3) The right to housing and affordability: This right implicates governmental programs such as those providing rental assistance, encouraging the maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of existing housing and enlarging the stock of new low-cost housing, all of which ensure the ability to secure and maintain housing without risking access to other essential needs.

(4) The right to rehousing assistance for persons and households that have become homeless: This right implicates such governmental programs as those supporting the transition of persons experiencing homelessness to long-term permanent housing that is affordable.

(5) The right to recognition of special circumstances: This right implicates the adaptation of governmental programs to ensure accessibility to households facing particular obstacles to finding affordable, decent, safe and stable housing, whether because of race,
religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, 
unemployment, criminal record, eviction history, family status, source 
of income, immigration status, cultural traditions, being victims of fraud 
and financial manipulation or other obstacles.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (Effective from passage) (a) There is established a right to 
housing committee to review existing and proposed housing policies 
and advise on (1) the state's progressive implementation of a right to 
housing; and (2) gaps and needs of vulnerable populations with regard 
to access to permanent housing, including, but not limited to, (A) 
individuals experiencing homelessness, including homeless youth; 
individuals with disabilities, including physical disabilities and 
disabilities related to mental health, substance abuse and 
developmental conditions; (B) individuals with past or current criminal 
justice system involvement; (C) individuals from historically 
 marginalized racial and ethnic groups; (D) individuals from historically 
 marginalized groups based on sexual orientation, gender identity or 
gender expression; (E) survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, 
dating violence, stalking and sexual trafficking; (F) refugees and 
immigrants; and (G) veterans.

(b) The committee shall consist of the following members:

(1) Three appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, 
one with expertise in homelessness policies and programs, one with 
expertise in low-income housing policies and programs and one with 
expertise in matters relating to evictions and housing court;

(2) Three appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one 
with expertise in fair housing protections, one with expertise in the 
development of low-income housing and one with expertise in, or 
personal experience with, disability and housing insecurity;

(3) Three appointed by the majority leader of the House of 
Representatives, one with expertise in, or personal experience with, the 
criminal justice impact on housing insecurity, one with expertise in, or
personal experience with, the impact of race or ethnicity on housing
insecurity and one with expertise in, or personal experience with, the
impact of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression on
housing insecurity;

(4) Three appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one with
expertise in, or personal experience with, the impact of sexual violence,
domestic violence, dating violence or stalking on housing insecurity,
one with experience in, or personal experience with, the impact of sex
trafficking and housing insecurity and one with expertise in, or personal
experience with, the impact of refugee or immigrant status on housing
insecurity;

(5) Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of
Representatives, one with expertise in, or personal experience with, the
impact on veteran status on housing insecurity and one of whom is a
current or recent recipient of homeless assistance, low-income housing
assistance or assistance in an eviction or housing summary process
matter;

(6) Two appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, both of whom
are current or recent recipients of homeless assistance, low-income
housing assistance or assistance in an eviction or housing summary
process matter; and

(7) The Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee.

(c) Any member of the committee appointed under subdivision (1),
(2), (3), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (b) of this section may be a member
of the General Assembly.

(d) All initial appointments to the committee shall be made not later
than sixty days after the effective date of this section. Appointed
members of the committee shall serve for three-year terms which shall
commence on the date of appointment and may serve until a successor
is appointed. Any vacancy shall be filled by the respective appointing
authority pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

(e) The chairperson of the committee shall be jointly appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro tempore of the Senate. Upon appointment of such chairperson, the work of the committee may begin even if all other appointments have not yet been made. The chairperson shall schedule the first meeting of the committee, which shall be held not later than ninety days after the effective date of this section. If appointments under subsection (b) of this section are not made within the sixty-day period specified in said subsection, the chairperson may designate individuals with the required expertise to serve on the committee until appointments are made pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

(f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to housing shall serve as the administrative staff of the committee.

(g) The committee shall meet not less than twice per fiscal year.

(h) The Department of Housing shall provide presentations and data regarding its implementation of the right to housing at the request of the committee.

(i) Not later than July 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the committee shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to housing, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

(j) During any regular or special session of the General Assembly, the committee shall identify and review any proposed legislation impacting the right to housing and may provide testimony on any such proposals given a public hearing before any relevant committees of the General Assembly, providing analysis on the potential impact of the legislation on the right to housing and the vulnerable populations described in
subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section to preserve such right.

Sec. 3. (NEW) (Effective October 1, 2021) (a) The Commissioner of Housing shall, within available appropriations, appoint an employee to serve as Housing Advocate within the Department of Housing and provide timely assistance to recipients of Department of Housing services concerning complaints and grievances related to the right of housing outlined by sections 1 and 2 of this act.

(b) The Housing Advocate, in consultation with the commissioner, shall:

(1) Receive, review, record and attempt to resolve any complaints and grievances regarding the right to housing;

(2) Compile and analyze data on such complaints and grievances;

(3) Assist residents in understanding their rights under the right to housing established under section 1 of this act;

(4) Provide information to the public, agencies, legislators and others regarding the problems and concerns of residents in regard to the right to housing;

(5) Analyze and monitor the development and implementation of federal, state and local laws, regulations and policies relating to tenants' rights, affordable housing, homelessness prevention, the impact of criminal justice and summary process involvement on housing accessibility and other issues related to the right to housing; and

(6) Provide data and recommendations to the right to housing committee established in section 2 of this act as requested.

(c) Not later than July 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the Commissioner of Housing shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
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relating to housing. The commissioner shall report on: (1) The implementation of the provisions of this section; (2) the overall effectiveness of the Housing Advocate position established in subsection (a) of this section; and (3) any additional recommendations for the Department of Housing to implement the right to housing established in section 1 of this act.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Effect Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>October 1, 2021</td>
<td>New section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec. 2</td>
<td>from passage</td>
<td>New section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sec. 3</td>
<td>October 1, 2021</td>
<td>New section</td>
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Statement of Purpose:
To establish a right to housing for all residents of the state.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]

Co-Sponsors: SEN. ANWAR, 3rd Dist.

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