



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

**Committee Bill No. 194**

LCO No. 3558



Referred to Committee on HOUSING

Introduced by:  
(HSG)

***AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RIGHT TO HOUSING.***

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

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

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

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

12 (2) When implementing such policies, regulations or grant criteria,  
13 give priority to assisting households with incomes below fifty per cent  
14 of the area median income, as described in section 8-39a of the general  
15 statutes.

16 (3) To the extent practicable, attempt to serve households currently  
17 experiencing homelessness or at risk of housing loss and those in the  
18 lower range of the income group to which the agency's or political  
19 subdivision's programs are directed.

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

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

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

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

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

42 (5) The right to recognition of special circumstances: This right  
43 implicates the adaptation of governmental programs to ensure  
44 accessibility to households facing particular obstacles to finding  
45 affordable, decent, safe and stable housing, whether because of race,

46 religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability,  
47 unemployment, criminal record, eviction history, family status, source  
48 of income, immigration status, cultural traditions, being victims of fraud  
49 and financial manipulation or other obstacles.

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

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

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

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

74 (3) Three appointed by the majority leader of the House of  
75 Representatives, one with expertise in, or personal experience with, the  
76 criminal justice impact on housing insecurity, one with expertise in, or

77 personal experience with, the impact of race or ethnicity on housing  
78 insecurity and one with expertise in, or personal experience with, the  
79 impact of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression on  
80 housing insecurity;

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

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

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

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

99 (c) Any member of the committee appointed under subdivision (1),  
100 (2), (3), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (b) of this section may be a member  
101 of the General Assembly.

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

107 authority pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

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

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

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

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

126 (i) Not later than July 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the committee  
127 shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint  
128 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of  
129 matters relating to housing, in accordance with the provisions of section  
130 11-4a of the general statutes.

131 (j) During any regular or special session of the General Assembly, the  
132 committee shall identify and review any proposed legislation impacting  
133 the right to housing and may provide testimony on any such proposals  
134 given a public hearing before any relevant committees of the General  
135 Assembly, providing analysis on the potential impact of the legislation  
136 on the right to housing and the vulnerable populations described in

137 subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section to preserve such right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

161       (c) Not later than July 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the  
162 Commissioner of Housing shall submit a report, in accordance with the  
163 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing  
164 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters

165 relating to housing. The commissioner shall report on: (1) The  
166 implementation of the provisions of this section; (2) the overall  
167 effectiveness of the Housing Advocate position established in  
168 subsection (a) of this section; and (3) any additional recommendations  
169 for the Department of Housing to implement the right to housing  
170 established in section 1 of this act.

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|---|------------------------|-------------|
| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: |                        |             |
| Section 1   | <i>October 1, 2021</i> | New section |
| Sec. 2  | <i>from passage</i>    | New section |
| Sec. 3  | <i>October 1, 2021</i> | New section |

**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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