



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

**Substitute Bill No. 194**



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 governmental programs that ensure the legal security of persons and  
24 households at risk of losing housing or experiencing homelessness,  
25 including eviction prevention programs, legal assistance in evictions,  
26 financial assistance, support services and problem-solving counseling;

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

31 (3) The right to housing and affordability: This right implicates  
32 governmental programs that provide rental assistance, encourage the  
33 maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of existing housing and enlarge  
34 the stock of new low-cost housing, all of which ensure the ability to  
35 secure and maintain housing without risking access to other essential  
36 needs;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

137 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2021*) (a) The Commissioner of

138 Housing shall, within available appropriations, appoint an employee to  
139 serve as Housing Advocate within the Department of Housing and  
140 provide timely assistance to recipients of Department of Housing  
141 services concerning complaints and grievances related to the right of  
142 housing outlined by sections 1 and 2 of this act.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

160 (c) Not later than July 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the  
161 Commissioner of Housing shall submit a report, in accordance with the  
162 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing  
163 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
164 relating to housing. The commissioner shall report on: (1) The  
165 implementation of the provisions of this section; (2) the overall  
166 effectiveness of the Housing Advocate position established in

167 subsection (a) of this section; and (3) any additional recommendations  
168 for the Department of Housing to implement the right to housing  
169 established in section 1 of this act.

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 Legislative Commissioners:**

Section 1(c) was rewritten to conform to standard drafting conventions.

**HSG**      *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*