

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5419

AN ACT CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO
INITIATE LEGAL ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO ALLEGED DISCRIMINATORY

Title: HOUSING PRACTICES.

Vote Date: 3/26/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/18/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

CO-SPONSORS:

Rep. Jason Rojas, 9th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Many consider housing the biggest challenge facing Connecticut, discriminating against individuals seeking housing makes the issue worse. This bill aims to permit the Attorney General to bring legal actions against individuals allegedly engaging in discriminatory housing practices.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language clarifies the intent of the bill as the original language amended a CHRO statute. The language also clarifies that the Attorney General will bring the suit in the Judicial District where the alleged crime occurred.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Tanya Hughes, Executive Director, CHRO: Neither supports nor opposes this bill, but submitted some comments regarding an existing process under the antidiscrimination statutes that may address the types of situations envisioned by this bill. She notes that housing complaints can be made to the office of CHRO; those complaints then go through mediation and investigation where the Commission conducts witness interviews, requests

documents, or uses other lawful investigation methods authorized by statute. If there is reasonable cause to believe the allegations of discrimination occurred as alleged in the complaint, the complaint is certified to the Office of Public Hearings (“OPH”) and a full hearing is conducted in that forum. She furthered that housing discrimination complaints can proceed before OPH or go to state court, based on the parties' preferences.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader, Connecticut General Assembly: He testified in support of this bill, stating that despite the Fair Housing Act of 1968 as part of the Civil Rights Act, discrimination continues to burden individuals and families. The National Fair Housing Alliance's 2023 Fair Housing Trends Report shows the highest number of housing discrimination complaints filed since the inception of the report 25 years ago. He stated that this bill would strengthen the protection of individuals and families seeking housing by giving the Attorney General’s Office the authority to independently investigate and act on potential Fair Housing Act violations without a complaint being filed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Beverly Allen: She testified in opposition to this bill, stating that she has concerns.

Reported by: Hillary Desideraggio

Date: 3-25-24