

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-209

AN ACT CONCERNING NONRESIDENT LANDLORD REGISTRATION AND
INCREASING PENALTIES FOR REPEAT BUILDING AND FIRE CODE

Title: VIOLATIONS.

Vote Date: 3/7/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Judiciary

PH Date: 2/27/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Housing Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill is aimed to assist tenants in Connecticut and hold property owners accountable by requiring specific landlords to register certain personal identifying information, as well as increase penalties for repeat violations of building and fire codes.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Modifies the definition of “nonresident owner” to clarify that it applies to controlling participants of business entities.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[John F. Kerwin III, Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney, State of Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice \(DCJ\)](#): Supports this bill stating that under current practices some municipalities do not adopt landlord registration ordinances for out-of-state landlords and those who do are generally not able to enforce them because it is common for one of these landlords to list the rental property as their address while organized in a state that does not require the disclosure of LLC members' identifying information, making the enforcement of fire, health and housing code violations impossible. Therefore, new provisions must be added to statute to require nonresident landlords in larger municipalities to provide a form of government ID so the state can protect tenants by holding neglectful landlords responsible for noncompliance.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Martin Looney, Senate President Pro Tempore, Connecticut General Assembly (CGA):

Supports this bill stating that invisible, out of state landlords have become extraordinarily problematic for tenants. Therefore, provisions like requiring out of state landlords to register personal identifying information and increasing penalties for repeat violations of building or fire codes are necessary to shore up existing regulations and protect tenants.

Anonymous: Supports this bill.

Chris Corcoran, Manager of the Healthy Homes Program Office for Community Child Health, Connecticut Children's:

Supports this bill stating that nonresident landlord registration can help keep kids and families protected from the impacts of lead poisoning. As it is not uncommon for there to be multiple cases of child lead poisoning within the same housing unit, the ability to contact landlords so that lead hazards can be quickly removed from a home is essential.

Karen Jackson: Supports this bill.

Paul Januszewski: Supports this bill stating that addressing safety concerns or code violations when the responsible party cannot be readily located, especially when abatement orders served on a property are ignored after repeated attempts to gain compliance, is necessary to protect tenants. Furthermore, this bill tackles the problem of those bad landlords that hide behind corporate shields or neglect fire and life safety violations and does so without impacting the good landlords.

Jim Perras, CEO, Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut, Inc. (HRBA):

Supports this bill stating that it ensures the safety of tenants and enhances accountability in the rental housing market without unfairly burdening responsible landlords who will be unaffected by an increase in penalties for repeat code violations.

Raphael Podolsky, Attorney and Policy Advocate, Connecticut Legal Services:

Supports this bill stating that it is an appropriate vehicle to allow the Housing Committee to examine complaints, coming from both tenants and property owners, that enforcement of housing-related property maintenance codes against out of state property owners has been ineffective. It is also recommended that the bill be modified by clarifying whether additional powers are needed by municipalities or prosecutors to secure appropriate jurisdiction and by ensuring that the DOH has funding programs available to municipalities not only through the HRRF but also for "clean and lien" repairs.

Eli Sabin, Legislative Coordinator, Connecticut Voices for Children (CT Voices):

Supports this bill stating that a high percentage of violations of local housing codes across the state go unreported, unaddressed, or unpunished, so increased penalties for repeat code violations and nonresident owner registration is necessary. In addition to the current provisions included in the bill, it is recommended that the disclosure requirement to landlords be expanded to smaller towns, the burden of disclosure should be put on landlords, the fines on landlords who don't comply should be raised, and the limitation that restricts recently increased housing code fines to civil cases only should be removed.

John Souza, President, Connecticut Coalition of Property Owners (CCOPO): Supports this bill in concept but believes that additional modification and clarification is needed. For instance, the bill should be edited to reflect an assumed cooperative interaction of the housing provider, before the fines are given. The bill should not be passed if it does not allow for a time frame for corrective action before fines accrue.

Walter Summers, Fire Marshal, Connecticut Fire Marshals Association: Supports this bill stating that the Fire Marshal's Association members have long had a problem with rental property owners who use LLCs to shield them from code enforcement, so any effort to assist towns and cities in finding the actual individuals responsible for these properties to improve safety in these locations is a welcome idea. The increase in penalties for repeat offenders of code violations is also supported as it will be an effective deterrent for landlords and property owners.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Bob De Cosmo, President, Connecticut Property Owners Alliance (CTPOA): Opposes this bill because "all we are doing with legislation like SB # 209 is pushing more local owners out of business in favor of out-of-State owners who we can't prosecute!" Furthermore, CTPOA believes that along with other flaws in the bill, "Most housing providers are law abiding citizens and Connecticut owners are responsive to code compliance but the bad actors who fail to perform usually live out of State and are immune from prosecution."

John Wilson: Opposes this bill stating that it "does nothing to solve the real problem that out-of-State owners are exempt from prosecution in Connecticut because we lack jurisdiction to serve these bad actors the papers to appear in Connecticut's court system."

Lin Yang: Opposes this bill stating that it is "one such example of adding housing cost, pushing rent higher, or reducing investment that otherwise should and could improve the rental property, and thus living condition for average people."

The following written testimonies provided general opposition to S.B. 209:

- **Anonymous**
- **Craig Barletta**
- **Joseph Braunstein**
- **Ashley Chaia**
- **William Collins**
- **Menachem Deitsch, Owner, Breit Realty LLC**
- **Luis and Martha Giraldo**
- **Shim Handlesman**
- **Esther Herman**
- **Moshe Ilowitz**
- **Levi Judqin**
- **Mary Lakota**
- **David Landau**
- **Mo Levenberg**
- **Vira M.**

- [Sonja Murphy](#)
- [Mahesh Nimmagadda](#)
- [Alison Rivera](#)
- [Rosa Toledo](#)
- [John Walker](#)

Reported by: George Vatis

Date: 3/28/2024