

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1264

AN ACT REQUIRING A NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS TO PARTIES BEFORE A

Title: FAIR RENT COMMISSION.

Vote Date: 3/6/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/18/2025

File No.: 203

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Housing Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill will require fair rent commissions to notify parties of their rights before the commission and of the commission's lawful authority. The aim is to increase transparency by clarifying one's rights and specifying the scope of the commission.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Barbara Fairbanks](#)

[Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation](#)

Both Barbara Fairbanks and Chris Senecal presented similar supportive arguments that this bill improves the clarity and transparency of fair rent commissions.

[John Souza, President, CT Coalition of Property Owners:](#)

[Jacob Reilly:](#)

John Souza and Jacob Reilly submitted duplicate testimony in support of this bill. They testified that this bill would improve the fair rent system. They also proposed a number of changes to the statutes that currently govern the fair rights commissions, including: that fair rent commissions membership should be composed of a mix of housing providers, tenants, realtors, and members of the public; that the verbiage of "Harsh and unconscionable" be

changed to "rent above the fair market value of similar units in a similar condition."; that decisions favoring landlords should be retroactive to the filing date; that all fair rent commission deliberations be made public and open to all.

[Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU](#): Jess Zaccagnino argued this bill will ensure people are aware of their legal rights before going to fair rent commissions.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Dahlia Romanow, Attorney, Connecticut Fair Housing Center](#): Dahlia Romanow argued that most fair rent commissions already provide, "written notice to the parties upon the filing of a complaint regarding the process, the rent to be paid in the interim, and the prohibition on retaliation and a similar notice regarding hearing procedures prior to the hearing", making this bill unnecessary.

[Raphael Podolsky, Attorney Policy Advocate, Connecticut Legal Services](#): Raphael Podolsky testified opposed the bill yet admitted it is a good idea to notify parties before fair rent commission of their rights. Podolsky opposed the verbiage of, "the scope of such commission's lawful authority", as too vague. Podolsky believed a statutory requirement that the commission's legal authority be articulated could potentially allow, "losing party appealing a fair rent commission decision on the ground that the commission did not sufficiently articulate its 'lawful authority' at the beginning of the hearing."

[Darrell Fennell, Attorney at Law](#): Darrel Fennell argued the proposed methods of notifying the litigant their rights before a fair rent commission would be ineffective in helping them understand their rights. Such written notification of a party's rights would not effectively be able to communicate all possible rights they have in a hearing because simply informing them of the ordinance or statute does not entirely enumerate their rights. Further, any "Miranda-style" reading of the ordinance before a fair rent commission meeting is both ineffective and prolongs the hearing. Parties need time to prepare the arguments they are going to make before the commission, therefore, informing them of their rights at the start of fair rent commissions is ineffectual because they are unable to bring new documents after being informed of their rights. Fennell believed this could impede the fair rents commissions' work by taking time away from more pressing matters they are trying to address, since fair rent commissioners are volunteers. The passage of this bill would invite appeals and potentially strain an already backlogged court system. Fennell concluded that the proponents of this bill seek only to interfere with the work of the fair rent commission rather than inform parties of their rights and increase transparency.

[Anonymous](#): Anonymous opposed this bill because "it impacts their business and limits the free market".

The following submitted testimony in general opposition of the bill:

[Anonymous](#)
[Anonymous](#)

Reported by: Arianna Tsikitas, Clerk
Conor Grew, CGA Intern

Date: 3/20/2025