
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5360

AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TENANT SCREENING.

SUMMARY

This bill modifies the law on residential tenant screening by establishing a new protection for applicants who are victims of domestic violence (as defined below). Specifically, it prohibits landlords from denying a domestic violence victim's rental application based on his or her credit history.

The bill allows applicants to establish their victim status by submitting any of the following documents to the landlord:

1. a letter from (a) a domestic violence or sexual assault counselor, (b) a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-certified housing counselor, or (c) the applicant's attorney;
2. a police report; or
3. an order of protection in effect when the landlord issues the tenant screening report, if the applicant is named as a protected person (a civil restraining or protection order, family violence protective order, criminal protective order, or standing criminal protective order).

Landlords who violate the bill's provisions must pay the applicant actual damages and attorney's fees. Actual damages include any application fee or deposit the applicant paid or any amounts the landlord charged the applicant for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

Existing law, unchanged by the bill, generally prohibits (1) housing-

related discrimination based on someone's domestic violence victim status and (2) anyone from knowingly making another person liable for "coerced debt" (generally, certain credit card debt incurred by a domestic violence victim who was coerced into incurring it) (see BACKGROUND).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEFINITION

By law and under the bill, "domestic violence" is:

1. a continuous threat of present physical pain or physical injury against a family or household member (spouses; former spouses; relatives; or people who live together, lived together, have children together, are dating, or were recently dating);
2. stalking, including 2nd degree stalking, of a family or household member;
3. a pattern of threatening, including 2nd degree threatening, of a family or household member or a third party that intimidates the family or household member; or
4. coercive control of a family or household member, which is a pattern of behavior that in purpose or effect unreasonably interferes with a person's free will and personal liberty (for example, coerced debt).

BACKGROUND

Coerced Debt

The law imposes specific obligations and responsibilities on coerced debt "claimants" (consumer collection agencies). Specifically, if a domestic violence victim gives a claimant certain information and documentation that a debt is coerced debt, the claimant must pause all collection activities on the debt for at least 60 days, review the victim's submission and other available information it has, and then continue or end its collection based on the review. Among other things, if a claimant ends collection activities against a victim, and had given negative

information about the victim to a consumer credit reporting agency, then the claimant must notify the agency to delete the information (CGS § 36a-651).

Housing Discrimination Based on Domestic Violence Victim Status

State law prohibits anyone from refusing to sell or rent after a person makes a bona fide offer; refusing to negotiate for the sale or rental of a dwelling; or otherwise denying or making a dwelling unavailable to someone based on their status as a domestic violence victim. A violation is a class D misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in prison, a fine of up to \$250, or both. This prohibition does not apply to the rental of owner-occupied single- or two-family homes (CGS § 46a-64c).

Under the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), a qualifying applicant may not be denied admission to housing assisted by certain federal housing programs on the basis (or as a direct result) of being a domestic violence victim (34 U.S.C. § 12491). (Poor credit history may be a direct result of domestic violence under certain circumstances, according to HUD guidance.)

COMMITTEE ACTION

Housing Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 14 Nay 4 (03/05/2026)