

Get the Toolkit: Housing Access and Collateral Consequences

An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of Criminal Records on Housing

What is this bill?

- Protects people from discrimination because of their criminal history by requiring public and private housing authorities to engage in an individualized assessment of people who are living with a criminal record when they apply to housing.
- Establishes the look-back period for individualized assessments three years for felonies from date of conviction. Landlords would not be permitted to consider criminal histories outside of the lookback periods.
- Bans discriminatory practices, like asking about a person's criminal history on initial housing applications unless required by federal law, advertising rentals with limitations based on criminal history, or lying about the availability of a rental because of a person's criminal history.
- Allows housing applicants to seek relief from the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities if they are discriminated against by landlords.

Why do we need to support this bill?

- Connecticut residents with a criminal record face over 550 legal barriers to meeting their basic needs, making it difficult to reintegrate into society and to support themselves and their families.
- People of color are disproportionately incarcerated, they are similarly disproportionately face barriers ranging from background checks as part of rental and public housing applications, exclusion from fair housing law protections, eviction and housing forfeiture, and denial of rental or sale.
- 79 percent of formerly incarcerated people have been denied housing due to a criminal conviction, and they are 10 to 13 times more likely to experience homelessness than people who have not been incarcerated.
- At the same time, policies that criminalize homelessness, like laws against loitering or panhandling, increase the likelihood that people with a criminal record will come into contact with the system yet again.

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Why do we need to support this bill? (cont.)

- Black women experience the highest rate of sheltered homelessness: almost four times more than white men and two times more than Black men.
- Stable housing is the base of ensuring successful reentry, yet our state makes it very difficult for people to actually obtain housing by constructing numerous collateral consequences related to housing.

What would we like from this bill?

- To end blanket bans on housing for people living with a criminal record and instead require housing providers to use a holistic, individualized assessment of rental applicants.
- To reduce gender and racial disparities and rates of homelessness when it comes to folks living with a record.
- To provide people with access to housing so that they can grow and thrive within their communities. When people who are living with a record are given a fair chance to find housing, earn a job, get insurance, and reintegrate into society, we all succeed.

What can I do to support this bill?

- Write or call your representatives and tell them that you support this bill. Find your legislators at <https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp>.
- Submit testimony to the Judiciary Committee in support of the bill during its public hearing in late February to early March.

You can find all this information and more, including model testimony and a summary of the bill, on our website at <https://www.acluct.org/en/take-action>.