



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1340, An Act Permitting a
Tenant to File a Complaint with the Fair Rent Commission Within Thirty
Days of Signing a New Lease**

Senator Marx, Representative Felipe, Ranking Members Sampson and Scott, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify in support of Senate Bill 1340, An Act Permitting a Tenant to File a Complaint with the Fair Rent Commission Within Thirty Days of Signing a New Lease.

The ACLU-CT believes in a society where all people, including those who have been convicted or accused of a crime, have equal opportunity to contribute to their communities and build successful and fulfilling lives. Everybody needs a safe, sanitary, and stable place to live, which builds prosperous communities. But especially since the pandemic, rent has skyrocketed across the country and across the state, increasing by 20 percent on average over the last two years.¹ At the same time, wages have not kept up with inflation, and the frequency of no-fault evictions has also increased, meaning that tenants are losing their homes even when a landlord did not claim they did anything wrong.²

People in Connecticut cannot have a future here if they cannot afford a place to live. When housing becomes unaffordable, there are cascading effects—like displacement

¹ See, e.g., Ronnuala Darby-Hudgens, *Expanded Fair Rent Commissions*, CONN. FAIR HOUSING CTR. (Apr. 1, 2022), <https://www.ctfairhousing.org/expanded-fair-rent-commissions/>.

² See, e.g., Tess Terrible & Walter Smith Randolph, *No Fault Evictions Are on the Rise in Connecticut: Here's Why*, CT PUBLIC (Apr. 15, 2022), <https://www.ctpublic.org/show/where-we-live/2022-04-15/no-fault-evictions-are-on-the-rise-in-connecticut-heres-why>.

from beloved homes, neighborhoods, and schools. When working people can afford to pay their rent, they can take better care of their families. Rent hikes and no-fault evictions are displacing people from their homes and communities, fueling gentrification, and increasing evictions and homelessness, which, because of systemic racism, disproportionately harms Black and brown working-class renters and immigrants.

Fair rent commissions are volunteer boards at the municipal level with powers to stop unconscionable rent increases, to set phase-in rent increases, and to delay a rent increase until housing code violations are fixed. Fair rent commissions are a powerful way for tenants to hold landlords accountable for unconscionable rent increases. Fair rent commissions are often the only avenue for people to challenge significant rent increases, but these commissions are completely unavailable to renters in 145 towns with populations under 25,000 people. The ACLU-CT supports bills that expand the scope, authority, and accessibility of fair rent commissions in this state. Senate Bill 1340 would increase the scope of complaints by permitting tenants to file with a fair rent commission either prior to signing a new or amended lease or not later than thirty days after signing. As such, the ACLU-CT supports Senate Bill 1340, and urges this Committee to do the same.