



## Fact Sheet Series for the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

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### House Bill 256

#### Allow Certain Crime Victims to Terminate Rental Agreement

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Sponsors: Representative Lisa Sobecki, Representative Michele Lepore-Hagan

Introduced: 4/14/21

Committee: House Civil Justice Committee

#### Under Current Law:

Current Ohio landlord-tenant law is silent as to exceptions for termination and the prohibition of retaliation from landlords against a tenant for termination due to sexually-oriented offense.

#### This Bill Would:

- Allow tenants who are victims of rape, attempted rape, domestic violence, dating violence, abuse, or a sexually oriented offense (“tenants”) to **change the locks on the premises or terminate a rental agreement** without liability for early termination if:
  - A qualifying protection order is issued; *or*
  - If the tenant has reported the alleged sexually-oriented offense to a qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- Require tenants, or a qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> party (e.g. law enforcement, health care professional, victim advocate) to provide **notification** of termination to the landlord, tenants to **vacate** within 30 days, and pay rent until vacating the property
- Prohibit landlords from taking **retaliatory action** (eviction, increasing rent) against the tenant, if the tenant terminates the lease or changes the locks
- Permit tenants to **sue a landlord** who takes retaliatory action
- Authorize a **nonrefundable income tax credit for a landlord** whose tenant has terminated the tenant’s rental agreement pursuant to the bill
- Prohibit the local government or law enforcement agency from charging tenants any **fee for the assistance** received from a law enforcement officer
- **Exclude from the General Nuisance Law** any call to law enforcement related to the sexually-oriented offenses mentioned above

#### Why This Legislation is Important:<sup>1</sup>

The majority of all sexual assaults occur where the survivor lives. However, 80% of sexual assault survivors cannot relocate due to lack of funding and housing options. In turn, lack of housing or inadequate shelter also increases the risk of sexual violence. Survivors deserve to have access to safe housing wherein they feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe from violence.

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<sup>1</sup> *Link Between Housing and Sexual Violence*, Nat. Sexual Violence Resource Ctr. (2014),

[https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/nsvrc\\_infographic\\_link-between-housing-sexual-violence.pdf](https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/nsvrc_infographic_link-between-housing-sexual-violence.pdf)

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