

# Comment Report

HSB 2

A bill for an act relating to rental agreements and early termination rights of tenants who are victims of certain crimes.(See HF 547.)

Subcommittee Members: Kaufmann-CH, Stone, Wessel-Kroeschell

Date: 01/17/2023

Time: 12:00 PM

Location: House Lounge

**Name:**

Laura Hessburg

**Comment:**

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) represents 21 local programs providing direct services to victims of violent crime. Assistance accessing safe and stable housing is the most requested service by the victims we serve and unfortunately, remains one of the greatest unmet needs. We urge support for HSB 2, allowing victims of violent crime to terminate a lease early if they provide their landlord, written notice, and documentation of harm. This bill reduces a major economic barrier to seeking safety, enables victims to remain in good standing with landlords and avoid an eviction record, which in turn gives survivors a better chance at escaping violence and economic hardship in the future. Currently, 32 states have adopted this sensible policy, including every state bordering Iowa. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness and economic instability for women and children because escaping abuse generally means losing housing and economic security as well as the means to regain it. Housing stability is foundational to efforts at preventing violence and enhancing economic security and safety. Avoiding eviction is central to these efforts. Having an eviction record limits access to stable housing which creates a cascade of negative consequences that undermine economic security by limiting access to safety, jobs, schools, etc. Victims of domestic and sexual violence routinely balance their risks when making decisions about seeking safety and without early lease termination, the options are not good. Victims who leave are frequently evicted for nonpayment of rent because they are unable to continue paying rent for the remainder of a lease for a home they can no longer safely stay. Alternatively, many victims remain trapped in dangerous relationships or in homes where they feel unsafe because they cannot afford to leave, i.e., they cannot afford to pay out the remainder of their lease AND they cannot afford to leave without paying rent because they cannot afford to have an eviction record. So they stay because being homeless is often riskier than staying. It is the economic reality of escaping a violent relationship, and in terms of this bill, the economic reality of being unable to terminate a lease early, that often forces decisions about seeking safety and keeps many victims trapped in a cycle of violence, housing instability, and economic hardship. Intimate partner violence remains a persistent and pervasive public health crisis in our country impacting 1 in 2 women over their lifetime and disproportionately impacting lowincome women and women and individuals from marginalized communities. Although lowincome victims face unique challenges, domestic and sexual abuse often cause victims who were not previously lowincome, to experience poverty. Physical violence is common in abusive relationships, but economic abuse is more pervasive, often inflicts longerlasting harm, and remains one of the most powerful methods of keeping a person trapped in an abusive relationship or trapped in poverty when they leave. Coercive partners are acutely aware of the link between a victims financial independence and access to safety and go to great lengths to sabotage a partners access to housing and employment, destroy credit history, or steal paychecks and financial assets. This bill creates a sensible way to reduce a major economic barrier to seeking safety for victims of violence and respects the needs of landlords. For landlords, the bill creates a process providing certainty about what they can expect in terms of collecting rent and certainty about when tenants leave so they can efficiently list available property. Again, escaping abuse often means losing housing and economic security and the means to regain it. In addition to reducing a barrier to accessing safety, this bill offers survivors a better chance at finding stable housing, economic security, and a violent free future. Please support HSB 2. It is time for our state to adopt this sensible policy and we appreciate the timely introduction and consideration of this bill.

## **IOWA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - SUPPORT HSB 2**

### **Allow Early Termination for victims of violent crime**

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) represents 21 local programs providing direct services to victims of violent crime. Assistance accessing safe and stable housing is the most requested service by the victims we serve and unfortunately, remains one of the greatest unmet needs.

We urge support for HSB 2, allowing victims of violent crime to terminate a lease early if they provide their landlord, written notice, and documentation of harm. This bill reduces a major economic barrier to seeking safety, enables victims to remain in good standing with landlords and avoid an eviction record, which in turn gives survivors a better chance at escaping violence and economic hardship in the future. Currently, 32 states have adopted this sensible policy, including every state bordering Iowa.

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness and economic instability for women and children because escaping abuse generally means losing housing and economic security as well as the means to regain it. Housing stability is foundational to efforts at preventing violence and enhancing economic security and safety. Avoiding eviction is central to these efforts. Having an eviction record limits access to stable housing which creates a cascade of negative consequences that undermine economic security by limiting access to safety, jobs, schools, etc.

Victims of domestic and sexual violence routinely balance their risks when making decisions about seeking safety and without early lease termination, the options are not good. Victims who leave are frequently evicted for nonpayment of rent because they are unable to continue paying rent for the remainder of a lease for a home they can no longer safely stay.

Alternatively, many victims remain trapped in dangerous relationships or in homes where they feel unsafe because they cannot afford to leave, i.e., they cannot afford to pay out the remainder of their lease AND they cannot afford to leave without paying rent because they cannot afford to have an eviction record. So they stay because being homeless is often riskier than staying.

It is the economic reality of escaping a violent relationship, and in terms of this bill, the economic reality of being unable to terminate a lease early, that often forces decisions about seeking safety and keeps many victims trapped in a cycle of violence, housing instability, and economic hardship.

Intimate partner violence remains a persistent and pervasive public health crisis in our country impacting [1 in 2 women](#) over their lifetime and disproportionately impacting low-income women and women and individuals from marginalized communities. Although low-income victims face unique challenges, domestic and sexual abuse often cause victims who were not previously low-income, to experience poverty. Physical violence is common in abusive relationships, but economic abuse is more pervasive, often inflicts longer-lasting harm, and remains one of the most powerful methods of keeping a person trapped in an abusive relationship or trapped in poverty when they leave. Coercive partners are acutely aware of the link between a victim's financial independence and access to safety and go to great lengths to sabotage a partner's access to housing and employment, destroy credit history, or steal paychecks and financial assets.

This bill creates a sensible way to reduce a major economic barrier to seeking safety for victims of violence and respects the needs of landlords. For landlords, the bill creates a process providing certainty about what they can expect in terms of collecting rent and certainty about when tenants leave so they can efficiently list available property.

Again, escaping abuse often means losing housing and economic security and the means to regain it. In addition to reducing a barrier to accessing safety, this bill offers survivors a better chance at finding stable housing, economic security, and a violent free future.

Please support HSB 2. It is time for our state to adopt this sensible policy and we appreciate the timely introduction and consideration of this bill.

*Prepared remarks House Judiciary subcommittee; January 17, 2023*  
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