

**House File 493 - Reprinted**

HOUSE FILE 493  
BY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 153)

(As Amended and Passed by the House March 25, 2015)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to the right of residents, owners, tenants,  
2 and landlords to summon emergency assistance and preempting  
3 related local ordinances, rules, and regulations.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 331.304, Code 2015, is amended by adding  
2 the following new subsection:

3 NEW SUBSECTION. 12. A county shall not adopt or enforce any  
4 ordinance or regulation in violation of chapter 562C.

5 Sec. 2. Section 364.3, Code 2015, is amended by adding the  
6 following new subsection:

7 NEW SUBSECTION. 11. A city shall not adopt or enforce any  
8 ordinance or regulation in violation of chapter 562C.

9 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. **562C.1 Title — purpose.**

10 1. This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the  
11 *“Right to Assistance Act”*.

12 2. The purpose of this chapter is to ensure that an owner,  
13 lessee, or lessor of property in need of law enforcement  
14 assistance or other emergency assistance in the state of Iowa  
15 is not penalized for those authorities being contacted, and to  
16 provide a remedy for violations of this chapter.

17 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. **562C.2 Definitions.**

18 For purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise  
19 requires:

20 1. *“Commercial landlord”* means a person who is the owner,  
21 lessor, or sublessor of a property on which a tenant operates  
22 or intends to operate a business.

23 2. *“Commercial tenant”* means a person who leases a property  
24 for the purpose of operating a business on the property.

25 3. *“Landlord”* means a commercial landlord or a residential  
26 landlord.

27 4. *“Owner”* means one or more persons, jointly or severally,  
28 in whom is vested either of the following:

29 a. All or part of the legal title to property.

30 b. All or part of the beneficial ownership and a right  
31 to present use and enjoyment of the property, and the term  
32 includes a mortgagee in possession.

33 5. *“Rental agreement”* means the same as defined in section  
34 562A.6 or 562B.7, or an oral or written agreement embodying the  
35 terms and conditions concerning the use and occupancy of real

1 estate used for commercial purposes, whichever is applicable.

2 6. "*Resident*" means a residential tenant, a member of such  
3 tenant's family, and any other person residing at the premises  
4 with the consent of the residential tenant.

5 7. "*Residential landlord*" means the same as "landlord" in  
6 section 562A.6 or 562B.7, whichever is applicable.

7 8. "*Residential tenant*" means the same as "tenant" in  
8 section 562A.6 or 562B.7, whichever is applicable.

9 9. "*Tenant*" means a commercial tenant or residential tenant.

10 Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. **562C.3 Uniform application.**

11 To provide for the uniform application of the provisions of  
12 this chapter, the provisions of this chapter shall supersede  
13 any local ordinance, rule, or regulation that is inconsistent  
14 with or conflicts with the provisions of this chapter.

15 Sec. 6. NEW SECTION. **562C.4 Prohibition of local penalties**  
16 **for emergency assistance contact.**

17 1. An ordinance, rule, or regulation of a city, county, or  
18 other governmental entity shall not authorize imposition of a  
19 penalty against a resident, owner, tenant, or landlord for a  
20 contact made for law enforcement assistance or other emergency  
21 assistance by or on behalf of a victim of abuse, a victim of  
22 a crime, or an individual in an emergency, if either of the  
23 following is established:

24 a. The person making the contact had a reasonable belief  
25 that the emergency assistance was necessary to prevent the  
26 perpetration or escalation of the abuse, crime, or emergency.

27 b. In the event of abuse, crime, or other emergency, the  
28 emergency assistance was actually needed.

29 2. Penalties prohibited by subsection 1 include the  
30 following:

31 a. The actual or threatened revocation, suspension, or  
32 nonrenewal of a rental certificate, license, or permit.

33 b. The actual or threatened assessment of penalties, fines,  
34 or fees.

35 c. The actual or threatened eviction, or causing the actual

1 or threatened eviction, from the leased premises.

2 3. This section does not prohibit a city, county, or other  
3 governmental entity from enforcing any ordinance, rule, or  
4 regulation premised upon grounds other than a contact made for  
5 law enforcement assistance or other emergency assistance by  
6 or on behalf of a victim of abuse, a victim of a crime, or an  
7 individual in an emergency.

8 Sec. 7. NEW SECTION. 562C.5 Prohibition of landlord  
9 penalties — waiver of rights.

10 1. A landlord may not prohibit or limit a resident's or  
11 tenant's rights to summon law enforcement assistance or other  
12 emergency assistance by or on behalf of a victim of abuse, a  
13 victim of a crime, or an individual in an emergency or may not  
14 impose monetary or other penalties on a resident or tenant who  
15 exercises that right.

16 2. Any waiver of the provisions of this section is contrary  
17 to public policy and is void, unenforceable, and of no force  
18 or effect.

19 3. This section shall not be construed to prohibit a  
20 landlord from recovering from a resident or tenant an amount  
21 equal to the costs incurred to repair property damage if  
22 the damage is caused by law enforcement or other emergency  
23 personnel summoned by the resident or tenant.

24 4. This section does not prohibit a landlord from  
25 terminating, evicting, or refusing to renew a tenancy or rental  
26 agreement when such action is premised upon grounds other  
27 than a contact made for law enforcement assistance or other  
28 emergency assistance by or on behalf of a victim of abuse, a  
29 victim of a crime, or an individual in an emergency.

30 Sec. 8. NEW SECTION. 562C.6 Remedies.

31 1. In addition to other remedies provided by law, if  
32 a city, county, or other governmental entity violates the  
33 provisions of this chapter, a resident, owner, tenant, or  
34 landlord is entitled to recover from the city, county, or other  
35 governmental entity any of the following:

1     *a.* An order requiring the city, county, or other  
2 governmental entity to cease and desist the unlawful practice.

3     *b.* Other equitable relief, including reinstatement of a  
4 rental certificate, license, or permit, as the court may deem  
5 appropriate.

6     *c.* Actual damages.

7     *d.* Reasonable attorney fees the resident, owner, tenant, or  
8 landlord incurs in seeking enforcement of this chapter.

9     *e.* Court costs.

10    2. In addition to other remedies provided by law, if an  
11 owner or landlord violates the provisions of this chapter, a  
12 resident or tenant is entitled to recover from the owner or  
13 landlord any of the following:

14     *a.* A civil penalty in an amount equal to one month's rent.

15     *b.* Actual damages.

16     *c.* Reasonable attorney fees the tenant or resident incurs in  
17 seeking enforcement of this chapter.

18     *d.* Court costs.

19     *e.* Injunctive relief.