

The House Committee on Judiciary offers the following substitute to HB 745:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 7 of Title 44 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
2 landlord and tenant, so as to provide for the termination of a residential rental agreement  
3 under circumstances involving family violence; to provide for definitions; to provide for  
4 notice and terms of termination; to provide for applicability; to revise the procedures between  
5 the landlord and tenant for the listing of damages during tenancy which form a basis for a  
6 charge against the security deposit; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws;  
7 and for other purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 **SECTION 1.**

10 Chapter 7 of Title 44 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to landlord and  
11 tenant, is amended in Article 1, relating to general provisions, by adding a new Code section  
12 to read as follows:

13 "44-7-23.

14 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

15 (1) 'Civil family violence order' means:

16 (A) Any protective order issued pursuant to Article 1 of Chapter 13 of Title 19,  
17 provided that the respondent was present or had notice of the hearing that resulted in  
18 the issuance of such order; or

19 (B) Any ex parte temporary protective order issued pursuant to Article 1 of Chapter 13  
20 of Title 19, provided that it is accompanied by a police report showing a basis for such  
21 order.

22 (2) 'Criminal family violence order' means:

23 (A) Any order of pretrial release issued as a result of an arrest for an act of family  
24 violence; or

25 (B) Any order for probation issued as a result of a conviction or plea of guilty, nolo  
26 contendere, or first offender to an act of family violence.

27 (3) 'Family violence' shall have the same meaning as set forth in Code Section 19-13-1.  
 28 (b) A tenant may terminate his or her residential rental or lease agreement for real estate  
 29 effective 30 days after providing the landlord with a written notice of termination when a  
 30 civil family violence order or criminal family violence order has been issued:  
 31 (1) Protecting such tenant or his or her minor child; or  
 32 (2) Protecting such tenant when he or she is a joint tenant, or his or her minor child, even  
 33 when such protected tenant had no obligation to pay rent to the landlord.  
 34 (c) The notice to the landlord pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code section shall be  
 35 accompanied by a copy of the applicable civil family violence order or criminal family  
 36 violence order and a copy of the police report if such order was an ex parte temporary  
 37 protective order.  
 38 (d) Upon termination of a residential rental or lease agreement under this Code section, the  
 39 tenant may occupy the real estate until the termination is effective. Such tenant shall be  
 40 liable for the rent due under such agreement prorated to the effective date of the  
 41 termination, payable at such time as would have otherwise been required by the terms of  
 42 such agreement, and for any delinquent or unpaid rent or other sums owed to the landlord  
 43 prior to the termination of such agreement. The tenant shall not be liable for any other fees,  
 44 rent, or damages due to the early termination of the tenancy as provided for in this Code  
 45 section. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, if a tenant terminates a  
 46 residential rental or lease agreement pursuant to this Code section 14 or more days prior  
 47 to occupancy, no damages or penalties of any kind will be assessable.  
 48 (e) This Code section shall apply to all residential real estate rental or lease agreements  
 49 entered into on or after July 1, 2018, and to any renewals, modifications, or extensions of  
 50 such agreements in effect on such date. This Code section shall not be waived or modified  
 51 by the agreement of the parties under any circumstances."

52 **SECTION 2.**

53 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsections (b) and (c) of Code Section 44-7-33,  
 54 relating to lists of existing defects and damages during tenancy, right of tenant to inspect and  
 55 dissent, and action to recover security deposit, as follows:

56 "(b)(1) Within three business days after the ~~date of the termination of occupancy~~  
 57 termination of the residential lease and vacation of the premises or the surrender and  
 58 acceptance of the premises, whichever occurs first, the landlord or his or her agent shall  
 59 inspect the premises and compile a comprehensive list of any damage done to the  
 60 premises which is the basis for any charge against the security deposit and the estimated  
 61 dollar value of such damage. The tenant shall have the right to inspect ~~the premises~~ such  
 62 list within five business days after the ~~termination of the occupancy in order to ascertain~~

63 ~~the accuracy of the list.~~ termination of the residential lease and vacation of the premises  
 64 or the surrender and acceptance of the premises and the inspection by the landlord or his  
 65 or her agent. If, at the landlord's election, the tenant is present with the landlord at the  
 66 time of the inspection, the ~~The~~ landlord and the tenant shall sign the list, and this shall be  
 67 conclusive evidence of the accuracy of the list. If the tenant refuses to sign the list, he or  
 68 she shall state specifically in writing the items on the list to which he or she dissents and  
 69 shall sign such statement of dissent. The landlord shall then comply with the provisions  
 70 of Code Section 44-7-34.

71 (2) If the tenant terminates occupancy vacates or surrenders the premises without  
 72 notifying the landlord, the landlord ~~may~~ shall inspect the premises and compile a  
 73 comprehensive list of any damage done to the premises which is the basis for any charge  
 74 against the security deposit and the estimated dollar value of such damage ~~make a final~~  
 75 ~~inspection~~ within a reasonable time, not to exceed seven days, after discovering the  
 76 premises has been surrendered by vacancy termination of occupancy. The landlord shall  
 77 sign the list and then comply with the provisions of Code Section 44-7-34.

78 (c) A tenant who disputes the accuracy of the final damage list ~~given~~ compiled pursuant  
 79 to subsection (b) of this Code section and provided to the tenant pursuant to Code Section  
 80 44-7-34 may bring an action in any court of competent jurisdiction in this state to recover  
 81 the portion of the security deposit which the tenant believes to be wrongfully withheld for  
 82 damages to the premises. The tenant's claims shall be limited to those items to which the  
 83 tenant specifically dissented in accordance with this Code section. If the tenant fails to sign  
 84 a list or to dissent specifically in accordance with this Code section, the tenant shall not be  
 85 entitled to recover the security deposit or any other damages under Code Section 44-7-35,  
 86 provided that the lists required under this Code section contain written notice of the tenant's  
 87 duty to sign or to dissent to the list."

### 88 SECTION 3.

89 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (a) of Code Section 44-7-34, relating  
 90 to return of security deposit, grounds for retention of part, delivery of statement and sum due  
 91 to tenant, unclaimed deposit, and court determination of disposition of deposit, as follows:

92 "(a) Except as otherwise provided in this article, within ~~one month~~ 30 days after the  
 93 termination of the residential lease or the surrender and acceptance of the premises,  
 94 whichever occurs last, a landlord shall return to the tenant the full security deposit which  
 95 was deposited with the landlord by the tenant. No security deposit shall be retained to  
 96 cover ordinary wear and tear which occurred as a result of the use of the premises for the  
 97 purposes for which the premises were intended, provided that there was no negligence,  
 98 carelessness, accident, or abuse of the premises by the tenant or members of his or her

99 household or their invitees or guests. In the event that actual cause exists for retaining any  
100 portion of the security deposit, the landlord shall provide the tenant with a written  
101 statement listing the exact reasons for the retention thereof. If the reason for retention is  
102 based on damages to the premises, such damages shall be listed as provided in Code  
103 Section 44-7-33. When the statement is delivered, it shall be accompanied by a payment  
104 of the difference between any sum deposited and the amount retained. The landlord shall  
105 be deemed to have complied with this Code section by mailing the statement and any  
106 payment required to the last known address of the tenant via ~~first-class~~ first-class mail. If  
107 the letter containing the payment is returned to the landlord undelivered and if the landlord  
108 is unable to locate the tenant after reasonable effort, the payment shall become the property  
109 of the landlord 90 days after the date the payment was mailed. Nothing in this Code  
110 section shall preclude the landlord from retaining the security deposit for nonpayment of  
111 rent or of fees for late payment, for abandonment of the premises, for nonpayment of utility  
112 charges, for repair work or cleaning contracted for by the tenant with third parties, for  
113 unpaid pet fees, or for actual damages caused by the tenant's breach, provided that the  
114 landlord attempts to mitigate the actual damages."

115 **SECTION 4.**

116 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.