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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 72 Session of 2025

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INTRODUCED BY BOROWSKI, GIRAL, KENYATTA, SMITH-WADE-EL,  
McANDREW, HOWARD, PIELLI, CIRESI, HOHENSTEIN, KHAN, GUENST,  
WARREN, SANCHEZ, HILL-EVANS, CEPEDA-FREYTIZ, DONAHUE AND  
BRIGGS, JANUARY 14, 2025

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, JANUARY 14, 2025

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AN ACT

1 Amending the act of April 6, 1951 (P.L.69, No.20), entitled "An  
2 act relating to the rights, obligations and liabilities of  
3 landlord and tenant and of parties dealing with them and  
4 amending, revising, changing and consolidating the law  
5 relating thereto," providing for tenants' rights in cases of  
6 violence.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. The act of April 6, 1951 (P.L.69, No.20), known  
10 as The Landlord and Tenant Act of 1951, is amended by adding an  
11 article to read:

12 ARTICLE V-C

13 TENANTS' RIGHTS IN CASES OF VIOLENCE

14 Section 501-C. Definitions.

15 The following words and phrases when used in this article  
16 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
17 context clearly indicates otherwise:

18 "Attesting third party." A law enforcement official,  
19 licensed health care professional, licensed social worker,

1 victim advocate or victim service provider.

2 "Domestic violence." The occurrence of any of the following  
3 acts between family or household members as that phrase is  
4 defined under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6102(a) (relating to definitions):

5 (1) Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing, or  
6 attempting to cause, bodily injury, serious bodily injury or  
7 sexual assault.

8 (2) Placing another individual in reasonable fear of  
9 imminent serious bodily harm.

10 (3) An act of domestic and other violence as defined in  
11 55 Pa. Code § 3042.3 (relating to definitions).

12 (4) The infliction of false imprisonment under 18  
13 Pa.C.S. § 2903 (relating to false imprisonment).

14 "Domestic violence counselor/advocate." As defined in 23  
15 Pa.C.S. § 6102(a).

16 "Eligible tenant." Any of the following:

17 (1) A tenant who is a victim.

18 (2) A tenant who has an immediate family or household  
19 member who is a victim and one of the following apply:

20 (i) the victim resides in the same dwelling unit as  
21 the tenant;

22 (ii) the victim resided within 1,000 feet of the  
23 tenant's dwelling unit at the time of the applicable act  
24 or crime;

25 (iii) the applicable act or crime was committed in  
26 the tenant's dwelling unit or within 1,000 feet of the  
27 tenant's dwelling unit;

28 (iv) the immediate family or household member of the  
29 tenant is a victim of stalking; or

30 (v) the immediate family or household member of the

1 tenant is a victim who was killed in the applicable act  
2 or crime.

3 "Immediate family or household member." Any of the  
4 following:

5 (1) A child or legal ward of the tenant, whether of a  
6 biological, foster, adoptive or step relationship and  
7 regardless of age.

8 (2) A parent, stepparent or legal guardian of a tenant  
9 or of a tenant's spouse or domestic partner or an individual  
10 who stood in loco parentis to the tenant when the tenant was  
11 a minor child.

12 (3) An individual to whom the tenant is legally married  
13 or the domestic partner under the laws of any state or  
14 political subdivision.

15 (4) A sibling, grandparent or grandchild, whether of a  
16 biological, foster, adoptive or step relationship of the  
17 tenant or the tenant's spouse or domestic partner.

18 (5) An individual who resides in the same dwelling unit  
19 as a tenant.

20 "Rape crisis center." As defined in 42 Pa.C.S. § 5945.1(a)  
21 (relating to confidential communications with sexual assault  
22 counselors).

23 "Responsible party." An individual who commits, or is  
24 alleged to have committed, an act of which a tenant or an  
25 immediate family or household member of the tenant is a victim.

26 "Sexual violence." As defined in 42 Pa.C.S. § 62A03  
27 (relating to definitions).

28 "Stalking." As defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 2709.1 (relating to  
29 stalking).

30 "Tenant." An individual who is a party to a written lease of

1 a dwelling unit and is entitled to possession of the dwelling  
2 unit.

3 "Victim." Any of the following:

4 (1) An individual against whom an act of domestic  
5 violence, sexual violence or stalking was committed or  
6 attempted, regardless of whether a responsible party was  
7 arrested or adjudicated for the commission of a crime.

8 (2) An individual against whom a crime as defined in  
9 section 103 of the act of November 24, 1998 (P.L.882,  
10 No.111), known as the Crime Victims Act, was committed or  
11 attempted, regardless of whether an alleged responsible party  
12 was arrested or adjudicated for the commission of the crime,  
13 if the crime or attempt:

14 (i) directly resulted in the individual's physical  
15 injury or death; or

16 (ii) included the responsible party exhibiting,  
17 drawing, brandishing or using a firearm or other deadly  
18 weapon or instrument and directly resulted in the mental  
19 injury of the individual against whom the crime was  
20 committed.

21 (3) An individual who is an intervenor as defined in  
22 section 103 of the Crime Victims Act in an act or crime  
23 described under paragraph (1) or (2).

24 (4) An individual who was physically present at the  
25 scene of an act or crime described under paragraph (1) or (2)  
26 and witnessed the act or crime and who, as a direct result,  
27 suffers physical or mental injury.

28 "Victim advocate." An individual, whether paid or serving as  
29 a volunteer, who provides services to victims under the auspices  
30 or supervision of a victim service provider, court or law

1 enforcement or prosecution agency.

2 "Victim service provider." An agency or organization that  
3 provides services to victims. The term includes a rape crisis  
4 center or domestic violence counselor/advocate.

5 Section 502-C. Early release or termination of lease.

6 (a) Release authorized.--If a tenant is an eligible tenant  
7 and the tenant needs to relocate as a result of an applicable  
8 act or crime, the tenant may be released from a lease by  
9 providing a notice in accordance with subsection (b).

10 (b) Required release.--

11 (1) An eligible tenant shall be released from a lease if  
12 the tenant provides the landlord with a valid notice under  
13 this subsection no later than 120 days from the date of any  
14 of the following, whichever is later:

15 (i) The most recent occurrence of an act or crime  
16 which makes the tenant an eligible tenant.

17 (ii) A document described under paragraph (2)(ii)  
18 (A), (B), (C), (D), (E) or (F) is issued.

19 (iii) The responsible party is released from a  
20 prison, jail, juvenile detention facility or any other  
21 detention facility or institution.

22 (2) A valid notice from the tenant under paragraph (1)  
23 shall include:

24 (i) A written notice signed by the tenant of the  
25 tenant's intent to be released from the lease as of a  
26 specific date. The written notice under this subparagraph  
27 shall include a statement that the tenant intends to  
28 relocate for the safety or the physical or mental well-  
29 being of the tenant or an immediate family or household  
30 member of the tenant as a direct result of an act of

1 which the tenant or an immediate family or household  
2 member is a victim.

3 (ii) Unless the landlord states in writing that  
4 additional documentation is not necessary, one of the  
5 following:

6 (A) A copy of a valid court order that restrains  
7 the responsible party from contact with the tenant or  
8 an immediate family or household member of the  
9 tenant.

10 (B) A letter from a licensed medical or mental  
11 health provider indicating that the tenant or an  
12 immediate family or household member of the tenant is  
13 a victim.

14 (C) A police report documenting the act of which  
15 the tenant or an immediate family or household member  
16 of the tenant is a victim.

17 (D) Evidence that the responsible party has been  
18 charged with or convicted of an act of which the  
19 tenant or an immediate family or household member of  
20 the tenant is a victim.

21 (E) A written certification form developed by  
22 the Office of Victim Advocate and signed by the  
23 tenant and an attesting third party in accordance  
24 with section 503-C.

25 (F) If the tenant's immediate family or  
26 household member is deceased as a result of a crime,  
27 any of the following:

28 (I) A written verification of death, burial  
29 or memorial services from a mortuary, funeral  
30 home, burial society, crematorium, religious

1 institution, medical examiner or government  
2 agency.

3 (II) A published obituary.

4 (III) A death certificate.

5 (c) Effect of notice.--After a valid notice is provided by a  
6 tenant in accordance with subsection (b), the following shall  
7 apply:

8 (1) The tenant shall be released from the lease no later  
9 than 30 days after the date the notice was provided, or on  
10 the date specified in the notice under subsection (b) (2) (i),  
11 whichever is later, if the tenant vacates the dwelling unit  
12 on or before the applicable date.

13 (2) The tenant shall not be liable for rent or other  
14 obligations under the lease accruing after the date of the  
15 termination.

16 (3) The termination shall not affect the tenant's  
17 obligations or outstanding rents or arrears under the lease  
18 accruing before the date of the termination.

19 (d) Construction.--Nothing in this section shall be  
20 construed to relieve a tenant who is not an eligible tenant from  
21 the tenant's obligations under a lease. If there are multiple  
22 tenants who are parties to a lease, the release of one or more  
23 tenants under this section shall not terminate the lease with  
24 respect to the other nonterminating tenants. A tenant released  
25 from a lease under this section shall not be liable to the  
26 landlord or any other person for rent accruing after the  
27 tenant's release or for actual damages resulting from the  
28 tenant's release from the lease.

29 (e) Limitation.--A tenant may not seek the termination of or  
30 a release from a lease under this section on the basis of an act

1 for which the tenant is the responsible party.

2 Section 503-C. Certification form requirements.

3 (a) Certification form.--The Office of Victim Advocate shall  
4 develop and display on the Office of Victim Advocate's publicly  
5 accessible Internet website a certification form with the  
6 requirements specified under subsection (b).

7 (b) Required information.--

8 (1) A tenant shall verify all of the following  
9 information in the certification form developed by the Office  
10 of Victim Advocate for the purpose of section 502-C(b)(2)(ii)  
11 (E):

12 (i) The tenant's name and the address of the  
13 dwelling unit.

14 (ii) The name of the victim if different from the  
15 tenant's name.

16 (iii) The name of the responsible party if known and  
17 can be safely disclosed.

18 (iv) The approximate dates and locations during  
19 which the act or acts which qualify the tenant as an  
20 eligible tenant occurred, including the most recent date.

21 (v) A statement that the tenant intends to relocate  
22 for the safety or the physical or mental well-being of  
23 the tenant or an immediate family or household member of  
24 the tenant as a direct result of an act of which the  
25 tenant or an immediate family or household member is a  
26 victim.

27 (vi) The date on which the tenant intends to vacate  
28 the dwelling unit.

29 (2) An attesting third party shall verify all of the  
30 following information in the certification form developed by



1 the Office of Victim Advocate for the purpose of section  
2 section 502-C(b) (2) (ii) (E):

3 (i) The name and business telephone number of the  
4 attesting third party.

5 (ii) The capacity in which the attesting third party  
6 received the information that the tenant or an immediate  
7 family or household member was a victim.

8 (iii) A statement that the attesting third party:

9 (A) read the tenant's verification under  
10 paragraph (1) and has been advised by the tenant that  
11 the tenant or an immediate family or household member  
12 of the tenant is a victim;

13 (B) believes that the tenant or an immediate  
14 family or household member of the tenant is a victim;

15 (C) believes the tenant is an eligible tenant;

16 (D) believes that the tenant needs to relocate  
17 for the safety or the physical or mental well-being  
18 of the tenant or an immediate family or household  
19 member of the tenant as a direct result of an act of  
20 which the tenant or an immediate family or household  
21 member is a victim; and

22 (E) understands that the verification under this  
23 paragraph may be used as the basis for releasing the  
24 tenant from a lease.

25 (c) Confidentiality.--Furnishing evidence or providing a  
26 verification under this section or section 502-C shall not waive  
27 a confidentiality or privilege that may exist between the tenant  
28 or victim and a third party.

29 Section 504-C. Change of locks.

30 (a) Right of tenants.--Subject to subsections (b) and (c),

1 if a tenant is an eligible tenant and the tenant has a  
2 reasonable fear that a responsible party or another individual  
3 acting on the responsible party's behalf may attempt to gain  
4 access to the dwelling unit that the tenant leases, the tenant  
5 may change or rekey the locks or other security devices for the  
6 dwelling unit. A tenant who changes or rekeys the locks shall  
7 notify the landlord within 48 hours and make arrangements to  
8 immediately provide a key or other means of access to the  
9 landlord or any other tenant, other than the responsible party,  
10 who is a party to a lease.

11 (b) Right of landlords.--If the locks or other security  
12 devices are changed or rekeyed under subsection (a), the  
13 landlord may change or rekey the locks to ensure compatibility  
14 with the landlord's master key or other means of access or  
15 otherwise accommodate the landlord's reasonable commercial  
16 needs.

17 (c) Prohibition.--If a responsible party is a party to a  
18 lease, a tenant may not change or rekey the locks or other  
19 security devices under subsection (a) unless:

20 (1) there is a court order, other than an ex parte  
21 order, expressly requiring the responsible party to vacate  
22 the dwelling unit or prohibiting the responsible party from  
23 having contact with the tenant or an immediate family or  
24 household member of the tenant who is a victim of the  
25 responsible party; and

26 (2) the tenant provides a copy of the court order under  
27 paragraph (1) to the landlord.

28 (d) Civil relief.--A responsible party shall not be entitled  
29 to damages or other civil relief against a landlord or tenant  
30 who complies in good faith with this section.

1 Section 505-C. Prohibition on certain acts by landlords.

2 (a) Prohibition.--A landlord may not do any of the  
3 following:

4 (1) Assess a fee or penalty against a tenant or  
5 otherwise retaliate against the tenant solely for exercising  
6 a right granted under this article.

7 (2) Consider a tenant for any purpose, due solely to the  
8 tenant exercising a right granted under this article, to have  
9 breached the terms of the lease.

10 (3) By reason of a tenant exercising a right granted  
11 under this article, withhold return to the tenant of a  
12 security deposit or other escrows to which the tenant is  
13 otherwise entitled due to the tenant terminating a lease  
14 under this article. The provisions of Article V shall  
15 otherwise apply with regard to the retention or return of  
16 escrow funds and to other sums that may be withheld by the  
17 landlord. Nothing in this section shall be construed to  
18 affect a tenant's liability for unpaid rent or other amounts  
19 owed to the landlord before the termination of a lease under  
20 this act.

21 (4) Increase or threaten to increase the rent, security  
22 deposit or fees payable under a lease, decrease or threaten  
23 to decrease services required under a lease or this act,  
24 terminate or threaten to terminate a lease, refuse to renew a  
25 lease, serve or threaten to serve a notice to terminate a  
26 periodic tenancy, bring or threaten to bring an action for  
27 possession, refuse to lease a dwelling unit or impose  
28 different rules or selectively enforce the landlord's rules  
29 because of any of the following:

30 (i) A tenant or an immediate family or household

1 member of the tenant is or has been a victim.

2 (ii) A tenant or proposed tenant has previously  
3 exercised a right granted under this article.

4 (iii) Criminal activity occurred relating to an act  
5 or acts of which a tenant or an immediate family or  
6 household member of the tenant is a victim and the tenant  
7 is not a responsible party.

8 (iv) Police or emergency personnel responded to a  
9 good faith complaint of activities relating to an act or  
10 acts of which the tenant or an immediate family or  
11 household member of the tenant is a victim and the tenant  
12 is not a responsible party.

13 (5) Disclose information reported to the landlord in a  
14 notice under section 502-C to another party unless any of the  
15 following apply:

16 (i) The tenant provides specific time-limited and  
17 contemporaneous consent to the disclosure in writing.

18 (ii) The information is required to be disclosed by  
19 a court order or any other Federal or State law.

20 (b) Willful violation.--

21 (1) If a landlord willfully violates this section, a  
22 tenant may terminate a lease or defend an action for  
23 possession on the grounds that the landlord willfully  
24 violated this section or obtain appropriate injunctive  
25 relief.

26 (2) In the action under paragraph (1), the court shall  
27 award the tenant an amount equal to two months' rent, or  
28 double actual damages, whichever is greater.

29 Section 2. The addition of Article V-C of the act shall  
30 apply to leases entered into or extended on or after the

1 effective date of this section.

2 Section 3. This act shall take effect in 120 days.