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A BILL

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IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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To amend Section 16-1501 of the District of Columbia Official Code to provide that the person aggrieved shall not file a complaint seeking restitution of possession for nonpayment of rent in an amount less than \$600 and to provide that the person aggrieved shall not file a complaint seeking restitution of possession without a current rental housing license; to amend the Rental Housing Act of 1985 to serve a written notice on a tenant before evicting the tenant for nonpayment of rent, to require photographic evidence to be submitted to court if a summons is posted on the property, to require notice in a tenant's primary language if the housing provider knows a tenant speaks a covered language other than English, to prohibit a housing provider from filing a claim to recover possession of a rental unit for the nonpayment of rent unless the housing provider has provided the tenant with at least 30 days' written notice of its right to do so, to specify language that must be included in a nonpayment notice, to require the Court to dismiss claims for possession in certain circumstances, to prohibit eviction if the housing provider does not have a valid rental registration or claim of exemption and current business license, to require the Court to seal certain eviction records, to authorize the Court to seal certain evictions records upon motion by a defendant, to authorize the Court to release sealed eviction records under limited circumstances with privacy protections in place, to require disclosure of certain information prior to requesting information or fees for the purpose of screening a prospective tenant, to limit the fees charged to a prospective tenant, to require a refund of application fees under certain circumstances, and to prohibit the use of certain information for the purposes of adverse actions against a prospective tenant; to provide for enforcement of the law through the Office of Human Rights; and to allow a prospective tenant to file a civil action in Superior Court if a housing provider violates this act and the tenant does not pursue administrative enforcement; to amend the Human Rights Act of 1977 to describe types of actions that may be considered unlawful source of income discrimination, to prohibit discrimination in housing based on a person having a sealed eviction record, and to prohibit conditioning real estate transactions and other terms or conditions of housing on disclosure of a sealed eviction record.

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40	BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
41	act may be cited as the "Eviction Record Sealing Authority and Fairness in Renting Amendment
42	Act of 20222021".
43	Sec. 2. Section 16-1501 of the District of Columbia Official Code is amended as follows
44	(a) The existing text is designated as subsection (a).
45	(b) New subsections (b), (c), and (d) and (e) are added to read as follows:
46	"(b) The person aggrieved shall not file a complaint seeking restitution of possession
47	pursuant to this section for nonpayment of rent in an amount less than \$600. Nothing in this
48	subsection shall prevent the person aggrieved from filing a complaint to recover the amount
49	owed.
50	"(c)(1) The person aggrieved shall not file a complaint seeking restitution of possession
51	pursuant to this section without a valid rental registration or claim of exemption pursuant to
52	section 205 of the Rental Housing Act, effective July 17, 1985 (D.C. Law 6-10; D.C. Official
53	Code § 42-3502.05), and a current license for rental housing issued pursuant to D.C. Official
54	Code § 47-2828(c)(1), as certified at the time of filing and documented at the initial hearing.
55	"(2) The Court may waive the requirements for a current license for rental
56	housing in this subsection if the person aggrieved can demonstrate that they were unable to
57	obtain or renew a current rental housing license due to extenuating circumstances.
58	"(3) The requirements of this subsection shall not apply to complaints involving
59	subtenants.
60	"(d) At the initial hearing for any complaint for possession, if the complaint does not
61	allege sufficient facts or the person aggrieved has not produced sufficient documentation to meet
62	all requirements under District law, the Court shall dismiss the complaint."

63	"(e) Subsections (b) and (c) of this section shall not apply to complaints involving
64	commercial tenants.".
65	Sec. 3. Title V of the Rental Housing Act of 1985, effective July 17, 1985 (D.C. Law 6-
66	10; D.C. Official Code § 42-3505.01 et seq.), is amended as follows:
67	(a) Section 501 (D.C. Official Code § 42-3505.01) is amended as follows:
68	(1) Subsection (a) is amended to read as follows:
69	"(a)(1) Except as provided in this section, no tenant shall be evicted from a rental unit,
70	notwithstanding the expiration of the tenant's lease or rental agreement, so long as the tenant
71	continues to pay the rent to which the housing provider is entitled for the rental unit; provided,
72	that the nonpayment of a late fee shall not be the basis for an eviction. No tenant shall be evicted
73	from a rental unit for any reason unless the tenant has been served with a written notice which
74	meets the requirements of this section. Notices for all reasons other than for nonpayment of rent
75	shall be served upon both the tenant and the Rent Administrator.
76	"(2) If a notice is served by posting a copy on the premises, a photograph of the
77	posted notice must be submitted to the court. The photograph must have a readable timestamp
78	that indicates the date and time of when the summons was posted.
79	"(3) If the landlord knows the tenant speaks a primary language other than
80	English or Spanish that is covered under the Language Access Act of 2004, effective June 19,
81	2004 (D.C. Law 15-167; D.C. Official Code § 2-1933), the landlord must provide the notice in
82	that language.
83	"(4) The Court shall dismiss a claim brought by a housing provider to recover
84	possession of a rental unit where the housing provider:
85	"(A) Did not provide notice as required by this section;

86	"(B) Filed the claim to recover possession of the rental before the number
87	of days of notice required by this section has elapsed;
88	"(C) In cases where a notice to quit or a summons and complaint are
89	served by posting on the leased premise, failed to provide the Superior Court with photographic
90	evidence of the posted service with a readable timestamp that indicates the date and time of when
91	the notice or summons were posted, or".
92	"(D) In cases where the landlord knows the tenant speaks a primary
93	language other than English or Spanish that is covered under § 2-1933, failed to provide the
94	notice required by this section in that language.".
95	(2) A new subsection (a-1) is added to read as follows:
96	"(a-1) (1) A housing provider shall provide the tenant with notice of the housing
97	provider's intent to file a claim against a tenant to recover possession of a rental unit for the non-
98	payment of rent at least 30 days before filing the claim.
99	"(2) Notice provided to a tenant shall contain the following or substantively
100	similar language:
101	"The total amount of rent owed is [list specific amount due]. A ledger showing
102	the dates of rent charges and payments for the period of delinquency is attached. You have the
103	right to remain in the rental unit if the total balance of unpaid rent is paid in full.
104	"[Name of housing provider] has the right to file a case in court seeking your
105	eviction if you do not pay the balance of unpaid rent in full within 30 days of this notice.
106	"You have the right to defend yourself in court. Only a court can order your
107	eviction. For further help or to seek free legal services, contact the Office of the Tenant Advocate
108	at 202-719-6560 or the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network at 202-780-2575."

109	(3) Subsection (b) is amended to read as follows:
110	"(b) A housing provider may recover possession of a rental unit when the tenant is
111	violating an obligation of tenancy, other than nonpayment of rent, and fails to correct the
112	violation within 30 days after receiving notice from the housing provider."
113	(4) A new subsection (r) is added to read as follows:
114	"(r) No tenant shall be evicted from a rental unit unless the housing provider provides
115	documentation to the court at the time of filing a writ of restitution demonstrating that the
116	housing provider has a current business license for rental housing issued pursuant to D.C.
117	Official Code § 47-2828(c)(1), unless the court waived the license requirement. The
118	requirements of this subsection shall not apply to complaints involving subtenants.".
119	(b) New sections 509 and 510 are added to read as follows:
120	"(a) The Superior Court shall seal all court records relating to an eviction proceeding:
121	"(1) If the eviction proceeding does not result in a judgment for possession in
122	favor of the housing provider, 30 days after the final resolution of the eviction proceeding; or
123	"(2) If the eviction proceeding results in a judgement for possession in favor of
124	the housing provider, 3 years after the final resolution of the eviction proceeding.
125	"(b) For court records relating to an eviction proceeding filed before March 11, 2020, the
126	requirements of subsection (a) of this section shall apply as of January 1, 2022.
127	"(c)(1) The Superior Court shall seal court records relating to an eviction proceeding at
128	any time, upon motion by a tenant, if:
129	"(A) The tenant demonstrates by a preponderance of the evidence that:
130	"(i) The housing provider brought the eviction proceeding because
131	the tenant failed to pay an amount of \$600 or less;

132	"(ii) The tenant was evicted from a unit under any federal or
133	District site-based housing subsidy program, or any federal or District tenant-based housing
134	subsidy program;
135	"(iii) The housing provider's initiation of eviction proceedings
136	against the tenant was in violation of:
137	"(I) Section 502; or
138	"(II) Section 261 of the Human Rights Act of 1977,
139	effective December 13, 1977 (D.C. Law 2-38; D.C. Official Code § 2-1402.61);
140	"(iv) The housing provider failed to timely abate a violation of 14
141	DCMR § 100 et seq. or 12G DCMR 100 et seq. in relation to the defendant tenant's rental unit;
142	"(v) The housing provider initiated the eviction proceedings
143	because of an incident that would constitute a defense to an action for possession under section
144	501(c-1) or federal law pertaining to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or
145	stalking; or
146	"(vi) The parties entered into a settlement agreement that did not
147	result in the housing provider recovering possession of the unit; or
148	"(B) The Superior Court determines that there are other grounds justifying
149	such relief.
150	"(2) An order dismissing, granting, or denying a motion filed under this
151	subsection shall be a final order for purposes of appeal.
152	"(3)(A) A copy of an order issued under this subsection shall be provided to the
153	tenant or his or her counsel.

154	"(B) A tenant may obtain a copy of an order issued under this subsection
155	at any time from the Clerk of the Superior Court, upon proper identification, without a showing
156	of need.
157	"(d) Records sealed under this section shall be opened:
158	"(1) Upon written request of the tenant; or
159	"(2) On order of the Superior Court upon a showing of compelling need.".
160	"(e) The court may release records sealed under this section for scholarly, educational,
161	journalistic, or governmental purposes, upon a balancing of the interests of the tenant for
162	nondisclosure against the interests of the requesting party; provided, that personally identifiable
163	information about the tenant, such as the name and address shall only be disclosed after:
164	"(A) Submission of a written request to the court by a researcher;
165	"(B) Approval by the court through the execution of a written data use
166	agreement that describes the research project;
167	"(C) Documented applicable Institutional Review Board approval;
168	"(D) Provision of documented procedures to protect the confidentiality
169	and security of the information; and
170	"(E) Provision of documented procedures for data storage and the data
171	destruction method to be used for the information provided.".
172	"(f) Any agreement pursuant to which personally identifiable information contained in a
173	court record or report is disclosed shall:
174	"(1) Prohibit the re-release of any personally identifiable information without
175	explicit permission from the court;

176	"(2) Require that the information shall be used solely for research or
177	administrative purposes;
178	"(3) Require that the information shall be used only for the project described in
179	the application;
180	"(4) Prohibit the use of the information as a basis for legal, administrative, or any
181	other action that directly affects any individual or institution identifiable from the data;
182	"(5) Set forth the payment, if any, to be provided by the researcher to the court for
183	the specified research project; and
184	"(6) Require that ownership of data provided under the agreement shall remain
185	with the court, not the researcher or the research project.
186	"(g) The Superior Court shall not order the redaction of the tenant's name from any
187	published opinion of the trial or appellate courts that refer to a record sealed under this section.
188	"(h)(1) Where a housing provider intentionally bases an adverse action taken against a
189	prospective tenant on an eviction court record that the housing provider knows to be sealed
190	pursuant to this section, the prospective tenant may bring a civil action in the Superior Court of
191	the District of Columbia within one year after the alleged violation and, upon prevailing, shall be
192	entitled to the following relief:
193	"(A) Reasonable attorneys' fees and costs;
194	"(B) Incidental damages; and
195	"(C) Equitable relief as may be appropriate.
196	"(2) For the purposes of this section, the term "adverse action" means:
197	"(A) Denial of a prospective tenant's rental application; or

198	"(B) Approval of a prospective tenant's rental application, subject to terms
199	or conditions different and less-favorable to the prospective tenant than those included in any
200	written notice, statement, or advertisement for the rental unit, including written communication
201	sent directly from the housing provider to a prospective tenant.
202	"Sec. 510. Tenant screening.
203	"(a) Before requesting any information or fees from a prospective tenant as a part of
204	tenant screening, a housing provider shall first notify the prospective tenant in writing, or by
205	posting in a manner accessible to prospective tenants:
206	"(1) The amount and purpose of each fee or deposit, whether mandatory or
207	voluntary, that may be charged to a tenant or prospective tenant and whether the fee or deposit is
208	refundable;
209	"(2) The types of information that will be accessed to conduct a tenant screening;
210	"(3) The specific criteria that will result in denial of the application;
211	"(4) Any additional criteria that may result in denial of the application;
212	" $(\underline{54})$ If a credit or consumer report is used, the name and contact information of
213	the credit or consumer reporting agency and a statement of the prospective tenant's rights to
214	obtain a free copy of the credit or consumer report in the event of a denial or other adverse
215	action;
216	"(65) The approximate quantity of rental units that will be available for rent over
217	a specified period, by bedroom size and monthly rent; and
218	" $(\underline{76})$ The number of days after receipt of a prospective tenant's application that
219	the housing provider will respond with an approval or denial decision:

220	"(8) The prospective tenant's right to dispute any information relied upon by
221	the housing provider that is inaccurately or incorrectly attributed to the prospective tenant
222	based upon prohibited criteria, and the right to receive a response from the housing
223	provider regarding any information disputed by the prospective tenant;
224	"(9) The prospective tenant's right to a refund for any unused application
225	fee; and
226	"(10) The prospective tenant's right to file a complaint with the Office of
227	Human Rights or pursue civil action via Superior Court if he or she believes the housing
228	provider has violated this section.
229	"(b) A housing provider may require a prospective tenant to pay an application fee of no
230	more than the greater of \$35 or the actual cost of obtaining information for screening a
231	prospective tenant.
232	"(c) If a housing provider fails to conduct a screening of a prospective applicant for any
233	reason, the housing provider shall refund any application fee paid by the prospective tenant
234	within a reasonable time, not to exceed 14 days.
235	"(d) For the purposes of tenant screening, a housing provider shall not make an inquiry
236	about, require the prospective tenant to disclose or reveal, or base an adverse action on:
237	"(1) Whether a previous action to recover possession from the prospective tenant
238	occurred if the action:
239	"(A) Did not result in a judgment for possession in favor of the housing
240	provider; or
241	"(B) Was filed 3 or more years ago.

242	"(2) Any allegation of a breach of lease by the prospective tenant if the alleged
243	breach:
244	"(A) Stemmed from an incident that the prospective tenant demonstrates
245	would constitute a defense to an action for possession under section 501(c-1) or federal law
246	pertaining to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, <u>including records</u>
247	of civil or criminal protection orders sought or obtained, or criminal matters in which the
248	tenant is a witness; or
249	"(B) Stemmed from an incident in which the prospective tenant was a
250	victim of a crime in the unit subject to the lease;
251	"(C) Is related to the prospective tenant or household member's
252	disability; or
253	"(DB) Took place 3 or more years ago.
254	"(e) A housing provider shall not base an adverse action solely on a prospective tenant's
255	credit score or lack thereof, although information within a credit or consumer report directly
256	relevant to fitness as a tenant can be relied upon by a housing provider.
257	"(f) If a housing provider takes an adverse action, he or she shall provide a written notice
258	of the adverse action to the prospective tenant no later than the response date provided to the
259	prospective tenant pursuant to (a)(7) of this section that includes: that shall include:
260	"(1) The specific grounds for the adverse action;
261	"(2) A copy or summary, free of charge, of any information obtained from a
262	third-party that formed a basis for the adverse action; and

263	"(3) A statement informing the prospective tenant of his or her right to dispute the
264	accuracy and permissibility of any information upon which the housing provider relied in
265	making his or her <u>adverse action</u> determination.
266	"(g)(1) After receipt of a notice of an adverse action, a prospective tenant may provide to
267	the housing provider any evidence that information relied upon by the housing provider is:
268	"(A) Inaccurate or incorrectly attributed to the prospective tenant; or
269	"(B) Based upon prohibited criteria under subsection (d) of this section.
270	"(2) The housing provider shall provide a written response, which may be by
271	mail, electronic mail, or in person, to the prospective tenant with respect to any information
272	provided under this subsection within 10 30 business days after receipt of the information from
273	the prospective tenant.
274	"(3) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prohibit the housing provider
275	from leasing a housing rental unit to other prospective tenants.
276	"(h)(1) Any housing provider who knowingly violates any provision of this section,
277	or any rule issues to implement this section, shall be subject to a civil penalty of for each
278	violation not to exceed \$1,000. A prospective tenant may file a complaint with the Office of
279	Human Rights if he or she believes that a housing provider violated this section. If the
280	Office of Human Rights determines that there is probable cause to believe that a housing
281	provider has knowingly violated this section, the Office of Human Rights shall certify the
282	complaint to the Commission on Human Rights, which may impose a civil penalty for each
283	violation not to exceed \$1,000, half of which shall be awarded to the complainant and half
284	of which shall be awarded to the District of Columbia and deposited into the General Fund
285	of the District of Columbia.

286	"(2) The fines set forth in subsection (h) of this section may be doubled for
287	any housing provider who violates this section in two or more cases in 24 months or fails to
288	implement a corrective action ordered by the agency within 90 days after the corrective
289	action is ordered.
290	"(3) The Mayor, pursuant to Title I of the District of Columbia
291	Administrative Procedure Act, approved October 21, 1968 (82 Stat. 1204; D.C. Official
292	Code § 2-501 et seq.), may issue rules to implement the provisions of this section.
293	"(i)(1) A prospective tenant may bring a civil action in Superior Court against a
294	housing provider who violates this section within one year after the alleged violation,
295	provided that prospective tenant may not pursue a civil action against a housing provider if
296	he or she has filed a complaint with the Office of Human Rights pursuant to subsection (h)
297	of this section.
298	"(2) Where a prospective tenant prevails in a civil action, he or she shall be
299	entitled to the following relief:
300	"(A) Reasonable attorney's fees and costs;
301	"(B) Incidental damages; and
302	"(C) Equitable relief as may be appropriate.
303	"(ji) For the purposes of this section, the term:
304	"(1) "Adverse action" means:
305	"(A) Denial of a prospective tenant's rental application; or
306	"(B) Approval of a prospective tenant's rental application, subject to terms
307	or conditions different and less-favorable to the prospective tenant than those included in any

308	written notice, statement, or advertisement for the rental unit, including written communication
309	sent directly from the housing provider to a prospective tenant.
310	"(2) "Tenant screening" means any process used by a housing provider to
311	evaluate the fitness of a prospective tenant."."
312	Sec. 4. The Human Rights Act of 1977, effective December 13, 1977 (D.C. Law 2-38;
313	D.C. 257 Official Code § 2-1401.01 et seq.), is amended as follows:
314	(a) Section 101 (D.C. Official Code § 2-1401.01) is amended by striking the phrase
315	"source of income" and inserting the phrase "source of income, sealed eviction record" in its
316	place.
317	(b) Section 102 (D.C. Official Code § 2-1401.02) is amended as follows:
318	(1) Paragraph (27B) is redesignated as paragraph (27C).
319	(2) A new paragraph (27B) is added to read as follows:
320	"(27B) "Sealed eviction record" means an eviction record that has been sealed
321	pursuant to section 509 of The Rental Housing Act of 1985, as introduced on DATE February
322	23, 2021 (Bill 243-096XXX).".
323	(3) Paragraph 29) is amended by striking the phrase "federal payments" and
324	inserting the phrase "federal or District payments" in its place.
325	(c) Section 221 (D.C. Official Code § 2-1402.21) is amended as follows:
326	(1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase "source of income" and
327	inserting the phrase "source of income, sealed eviction record" in its place.
328	(2) Subsection (a)(5) is amended by striking the phrase "source of income" and
329	inserting the phrase "source of income, sealed eviction record" in its place.
330	(3) New subsections (g) and (h) are added to read as follows:

331	"(g) Source of income.
332	"(1) It shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice to do any of the acts prohibited
333	in subsection (a) or subsection (b) of this section to a prospective tenant seeking to rent with the
334	assistance of an income-based housing subsidy based on:
335	"(A) Prior rental history involving nonpayment or late payment of rent, if
336	the nonpayment or late payment of rent occurred prior to receipt of the income-based subsidy;
337	"(B) Income level (other than whether or not the level is below a threshold
338	as required by local or federal law), credit score, or lack of credit score; and
339	"(C) Any credit issues that arose prior to the receipt of the income-based
340	subsidy.
341	"(2) There shall be a rebuttable presumption that an unlawful discriminatory
342	practice has occurred if a housing provider charges a prospective tenant any mandatory fees or
343	deposits other than a security deposit and application fee.
344	"(3) There shall be a rebuttable presumption that an unlawful discriminatory
345	practice has occurred if a housing provider denies a rental application from a tenant that meets
346	their posted selection criteria and the same rental unit was offered to an applicant who is not of a
347	protected class and who submitted their application one or more days later than the rejected
348	applicant.
349	"(h) Sealed eviction records.
350	"(1) It shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice to do any of the acts prohibited
351	in subsection (a) or subsection (b) of this section based on information contained within a sealed
352	eviction record or the actual knowledge or belief that a person has a sealed eviction record.".

353	"(2) It shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice to require a person to disclose
354	a sealed eviction record as a condition of:
355	"(A) Entering into any transaction in real property;
356	"(B) Inclusion of any clause, condition, or restriction in the terms of a
357	transaction in real property;
358	"(C) Appraisal of a property, agreement to lend money, guarantee a loan,
359	purchase a loan, accept residential real property as security for a loan, accept a deed of trust or
360	mortgage, or otherwise make funds available for the purchase, acquisition, construction,
361	alteration, rehabilitation, repair, or maintenance of real property; or to provide title or other
362	insurance relating to ownership or use of any interest in real property;
363	"(D) Access to facilities, services, repairs, or improvements for a tenant or
364	lessee; or
365	"(E) Access to, or membership or participation in any multiple-listing
366	service, real estate brokers' organization or other service, organization, or facility relating to the
367	business of selling or renting residential real estate, including in terms or conditions of access,
368	membership or participation in any such organization, service, or facility.".
369	Sec. 5. Applicability.
370	(a) Section 510(h) under Section 3 of this act shall apply upon the date of inclusion
371	of its fiscal effect in an approved budget and financial plan.
372	(b) The Chief Financial Officer shall certify the date of the inclusion of the fiscal
373	effect in an approved budget and financial plan and provide notice to the Budget Director
374	of the Council of the certification.

375	(c)(1) The Budget Director shall cause notice of the certification to be published in
376	the District of Columbia Register.
377	(2) The date of the publication of the notice of the certification shall not affect
378	the applicability of this act.
379	Sec. <u>6</u> 5. Fiscal impact statement.
380	The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
381	impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
382	approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).
383	Sec. <u>7</u> 6. Effective date.
384	This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
385	Mayor, action by Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as
386	provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
387	24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
388	Columbia Register.