

HCS HBs 243 & 544 -- VICTIMS OF CERTAIN OFFENSES

SPONSOR: Neely

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 12 to 1. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill provides that a person who is, has been, or is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking shall not be denied tenancy, evicted from the premises, or in violation of a lease agreement on the basis of or as a direct result of being such a victim. The tenant has an affirmative defense, in certain actions brought by the landlord, that the tenant who vacated the premises was a victim or was in imminent danger of becoming a victim of sexual assault, domestic violence or stalking. Additionally, this bill provides a list of acceptable evidence that the landlord must accept as proof that the lessee or tenant was or was going to be a victim of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking. This bill also allows a landlord to impose a termination fee on such a tenant or lessee who wants to terminate the lease before the expiration date.

This bill is similar to SB 60 (2019).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that safe and affordable housing is an important part of keeping women safe from abusers and children in stable situations. Landlord representatives say that they also want their tenants to be safe, so they are not opposed as long as the right protections are in place. The original bill along with the changes in the house committee substitute will address those protections.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Neely; Holly Bickmeyer; Missouri Realtors; Missouri Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence; Kate Heinen, Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA); St. Louis Apartment Association; and Heather Silverman, National Council of Jewish Women - St. Louis (NCJW).

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.