

## **SUPPORT EARLY LEASE TERMINATION for victims of domestic and sexual abuse**

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) enthusiastically supports [HSB 141](#), allowing victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse, stalking and elder abuse to terminate a lease early if they provide landlords, written notice, and documentation of harm.

This bill reduces a major economic barrier to seeking safety, enables victims to remain in good standing with landlords and avoid an eviction record, which in turn gives survivors a better chance at escaping violence and economic hardship in the future. Currently, forty states have adopted this sensible policy, including every state bordering Iowa. [This bill passed the House 94-0 in 2023]

ICADV represents 22 crime victim service provider organization across Iowa serving victims of violent crime including domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking. Assistance accessing safe and stable housing is the most frequently requested service by crime victims seeking support from these providers and unfortunately, remains one of the greatest unmet needs for victims we serve. In the latest annual point-in-time survey counting the services provided and the unmet need in Iowa on a single day – 62% of services provided to victims that day involved housing assistance and unfortunately- among requests for services that agencies could not provide on that day due to various obstacles- 93% involved requests for housing support. [*survey is of ICADV member agencies- these agencies support most of the victims served by providers receiving public funds administered by the Iowa AG.*]

Escaping abuse generally means losing housing and economic security as well as the means to regain it. And because leaving a violent home is the most dangerous time for most survivors, the economic reality of escaping violence heavily impacts decisions about seeking safety. Without early lease termination, the options are not good.

Survivors of violent crime are acutely aware that having an eviction record severely limits access to housing and creates a cascade of negative consequences that undermine economic security by limiting access to safety, jobs, schools, etc. And for service providers or anyone supporting a survivor- an eviction record makes it a lot harder to help them find housing.

Many victims remain trapped in dangerous relationships because they cannot afford to leave, i.e., they cannot afford to pay out the remainder of a lease so they stay because they cannot afford having an eviction record -- and being homeless, especially with children, is riskier than staying. Alternatively, many victims who do leave are frequently evicted for nonpayment of rent because staying was riskier than leaving but they were unable to continue paying out the remainder of a lease.

This bill creates a sensible way to respect the needs of landlords and tenants. For landlords the bill provides certainty about what they can expect in terms of collecting rent and certainty about when tenants leave so they can efficiently list available property. Many landlords go out of their way to help a tenant experiencing violence- in providing certainty in these situations- it also helps avoid a potentially dangerous outcome.

For violent crime victims the bill reduces a major economic barrier to seeking safety. Again, it is difficult to obtain stable housing when you have an eviction record. Enabling survivors to terminate a lease early and avoid eviction at this critical point is key and can mean the difference between a lifetime of economic hardship and a future free from violence. The very least we can do for victims of domestic and sexual violence is to enable a smoother path toward finding safe, stable housing. Please support this bill.