



STATEMENT SUPPORTING HF 547 - EARLY LEASE TERMINATION

We urge support for HF 547, 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, at least 32 states have adopted this sensible policy, including every state bordering Iowa.

Assistance accessing safe and stable housing is the most frequently requested support service by crime victims seeking services from local crime victim support agencies across Iowa and unfortunately, remains one of the greatest unmet needs for victims of gender violence. In an annual point-in-time [survey](#) showing the services provided and unmet need in Iowa on a single day – on that day, 1,097 victims were served- but victims made 271 requests for services that programs could not provide because agencies lacked the resources and *99% of unmet needs were for housing/emergency shelter.*

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

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 to have an eviction record -- and being homeless, especially with children, is riskier than staying.

Alternatively, many victims who leave are frequently evicted for nonpayment of rent because they are unable to continue paying rent for the remainder of a lease but staying *is* riskier than leaving and being homeless. Having an eviction record limits access to housing and creates a cascade of negative consequences that undermine economic security by limiting access to safety, jobs, schools, etc.

Enabling survivors to 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. It is difficult to obtain and maintain stable housing when you have an eviction record. The very least we can do for victims of domestic and sexual violence is to help them avoid eviction for deciding to protect themselves or their children from harm.

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.

For violent crime victims the bill reduces a major barrier to seeking safety and offers survivors a better chance at finding stable housing, economic security, and a violent free future. Please support HF 547.



EARLY LEASE TERMINATION TALKING POINTS

Please support [HF 547](#), allowing violent crime victims (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 gives survivors a better chance at escaping violence and economic hardship in the future. Currently, 32 states have adopted this sensible policy.

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

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 to have an eviction record -- and being homeless is riskier than staying. Alternatively, many victims who leave are frequently evicted for nonpayment of rent because staying *is* riskier than leaving and being homeless.

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.

For survivors, avoiding eviction at this critical point can mean the difference between a lifetime of economic hardship and a future free from violence. Having an eviction record limits access to housing and creates a cascade of negative consequences that undermine economic security over a lifetime by limiting access to safety, jobs, schools, etc. The very least we can do for crime victims is to not penalize them for deciding to protect themselves and their children from harm.