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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2578**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2018 Regular Session**

**By** House Judiciary (originally sponsored by Representatives Riccelli, Kirby, Macri, Peterson, Appleton, McBride, Frame, Doglio, Stanford, Goodman, Senn, Gregerson, Wylie, Sawyer, Kloba, Santos, Ormsby, Robinson, and Bergquist)

AN ACT Relating to ensuring housing options; amending RCW 36.22.178; amending 2017 3rd sp.s. c 4 s 1028 (uncodified); adding a new section to chapter 59.18 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 43.31 RCW; and prescribing penalties.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 59.18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) A landlord may not, based on the source of income of an otherwise eligible prospective tenant or current tenant:

(a) Refuse to lease or rent any real property to a prospective tenant or current tenant, unless the: (i) Prospective tenant's or current tenant's source of income is conditioned on the real property passing inspection; (ii) written estimate of the cost of improvements necessary to pass inspection is at least one thousand five hundred dollars more than the monthly rent of the real property; and (iii) landlord has not received moneys from the landlord mitigation program account to make the improvements;

(b) Expel a prospective tenant or current tenant from any real property;

(c) Make any distinction, discrimination, or restriction against a prospective tenant or current tenant in the price, terms, conditions, fees, or privileges relating to the rental, lease, or occupancy of real property or in the furnishing of any facilities or services in connection with the rental, lease, or occupancy of real property;

(d) Attempt to discourage the rental or lease of any real property to a prospective tenant or current tenant;

(e) Assist, induce, incite, or coerce another person to commit an act or engage in a practice that violates this section;

(f) Coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in the exercise or enjoyment of, or on account of the person having exercised or enjoyed or having aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of, any right granted or protected under this section;

(g) Represent to a person that a dwelling unit is not available for inspection or rental when the dwelling unit in fact is available for inspection or rental; or

(h) Otherwise make unavailable or deny a dwelling unit to a prospective tenant or current tenant that, but for his or her source of income, would be eligible to rent real property.

(2) A landlord may not, based on the source of income of an otherwise eligible prospective tenant or current tenant, publish, circulate, issue, or display, or cause to be published, circulated, issued, or displayed, any communication, notice, advertisement, or sign of any kind relating to the rental or lease of real property that indicates any source of income.

(3) If a landlord requires that a prospective tenant or current tenant have a certain threshold level of income, any source of income in the form of a rent voucher or subsidy must be subtracted from the total of the monthly rent prior to calculating if the income criteria have been met.

(4) A person in violation of this section shall be held liable in a civil action for four and one-half times the monthly rent of the real property at issue, as well as court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees.

(5) As used in this section, "source of income" includes benefits or subsidy programs including housing assistance, public assistance, emergency rental assistance, veterans benefits, social security, supplemental security income or other retirement programs, and other programs administered by any federal, state, local, or nonprofit entity. "Source of income" does not include income derived in an illegal manner.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.31 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of funds for this purpose, the landlord mitigation program is created and administered by the department. The department shall have such rule-making authority as the department deems necessary to administer the program. The following types of claims related to private market rental units are eligible for reimbursement from the landlord mitigation program account:

(a) Up to five thousand dollars for improvements identified in section 1(1)(a) of this act. In order to be eligible for reimbursement under this subsection (1)(a), the landlord must contribute one hundred percent of the first one thousand dollars for improvements, match dollar-for-dollar any moneys received from the landlord mitigation program account, and rent to the tenant whose source of income was conditioned on the real property passing inspection. Reimbursement under this subsection (1)(a) may also include up to fourteen days of lost rental income from the date of offer of housing to the tenant whose source of income was conditioned on the real property passing inspection until move in by that tenant;

(b) Reimbursement for damages as reflected in a judgment obtained against the tenant through either an unlawful detainer proceeding, or through a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction after a hearing; and

(c) Reimbursement for damages established pursuant to subsection (2) of this section.

(2) In order for a claim under subsection (1)(c) of this section to be eligible for reimbursement from the landlord mitigation program account, a landlord must:

(a) Have ensured that the rental property was inspected at the commencement of the tenancy by both the tenant and the landlord and that a detailed written move-in property inspection report was prepared and signed by both the tenant and the landlord;

(b) Make repairs and then apply for reimbursement to the department;

(c) Submit a claim on a form to be determined by the department, signed under penalty of perjury; and

(d) Submit to the department copies of the move-in property inspection report specified in (a) of this subsection, before repair and after repair photographs, copies of repair receipts for labor and materials, and such other documentation or information as the department may request.

(3) The department shall make reasonable efforts to review a claim within ten business days from the date it received properly submitted and complete claims to the satisfaction of the department. In reviewing a claim, and determining eligibility for reimbursement, the department must receive documentation, acceptable to the department in its sole discretion, that the claim involves a private market rental unit rented to a low-income tenant whose source of income is specified in section 1(5) of this act and who is using public rental assistance to pay for rent, such as a housing choice rental voucher.

(4) Damages from a tenancy must total at least five hundred dollars in order for a claim to be eligible for reimbursement from the program. Damages may exceed five thousand dollars, however, reimbursement from the program may not exceed five thousand dollars per tenancy.

(5) Damages, beyond wear and tear, that are eligible for reimbursement include, but are not limited to: Interior wall gouges and holes; damage to doors and cabinets, including hardware; carpet stains or burns; cracked tiles or hard surfaces; broken windows; damage to household fixtures such as disposal, toilet, sink, sink handle, ceiling fan, and lighting. Other property damages beyond normal wear and tear may also be eligible for reimbursement at the department's discretion. Damages may also include unpaid rent, provided that the landlord can evidence it to the department's satisfaction, in an amount not to exceed twenty percent of the total claim submitted.

(6) All reimbursements for eligible claims shall be made on a first-come, first-served basis, to the extent of available funds. The department shall use best efforts to notify the tenant of the amount and the reasons for any reimbursements made.

(7) The department, in its sole discretion, may inspect the property and the landlord's records related to a claim to assist in making its claim review and determination of eligibility.

(8) A landlord in receipt of reimbursement from the program is prohibited from:

(a) Taking legal action against the tenant for damages attributable to the same tenancy; or

(b) Pursuing collection, or authorizing another entity to pursue collection on the landlord's behalf, of a judgment against the tenant for damages attributable to the same tenancy.

(9) A landlord denied reimbursement under subsection (1)(c) of this section may seek to obtain a judgment from a court of competent jurisdiction and, if successful, may resubmit a claim for damages supported by the judgment, along with a certified copy of the judgment. The department may reimburse the landlord for that portion of such judgment that is based on damages reimbursable under the landlord mitigation program, subject to the limitations set forth in this section.

(10) Determinations regarding reimbursements shall be made by the department in its sole discretion.

(11) The department must establish a web site that advertises the landlord mitigation program, the availability of reimbursement from the landlord mitigation program account, and maintains or links to the agency rules and policies established pursuant to this section.

(12) Neither the state, the department, or persons acting on behalf of the department, while acting within the scope of their employment or agency, is liable to any person for any loss, damage, harm, or other consequence resulting directly or indirectly from the department's administration of the landlord mitigation program or determinations under this section.

(13)(a) A report to the appropriate committees of the legislature on the effectiveness of the program and recommended modifications shall be submitted to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 1, 2021. In preparing the report, the department shall convene and solicit input from a group of stakeholders to include representatives of large multifamily housing property owners or managers, small rental housing owners in both rural and urban markets, a representative of tenant advocates, and a representative of the housing authorities.

(b) The report shall include discussion of the effectiveness of the program as well as the department's recommendations to improve the program, and shall include the following:

(i) The number of total claims and total amount reimbursed to landlords by the fund;

(ii) Any indices of fraud identified by the department;

(iii) Any reports by the department regarding inspections authorized by and conducted on behalf of the department;

(iv) An outline of the process to obtain reimbursement for improvements and for damages from the fund;

(v) An outline of the process to obtain reimbursement for lost rent due to the rental inspection and tenant screening process, together with the total amount reimbursed for such damages;

(vi) Any other modifications and recommendations made by stakeholders to improve the effectiveness and applicability of the program.

(14) "Private market rental unit" means any unit available for rent that is owned by an individual, corporation, limited liability company, nonprofit housing provider, or other entity structure, but does not include housing acquired, or constructed by a public housing agency under 42 U.S.C. Sec. 1437 as it existed on January 1, 2018.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.31 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The landlord mitigation program account is created in the custody of the state treasury. All transfers and appropriations by the legislature, repayments, private contributions, and all other sources must be deposited into the account. Expenditures from the account may only be used for the landlord mitigation program under this chapter to reimburse landlords for eligible claims identified in section 2 of this act related to private market rental units during the time of their rental to tenants whose source of income is specified in section 1(5) of this act. Only the director or the director's designee may authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

(2) Administrative costs associated with application, distribution, and other program activities of the department may not exceed ten percent of the annual funds available for the landlord mitigation program. Reappropriations must not be included in the calculation of the annual funds available for determining the administrative costs.

**Sec.**  2017 3rd sp.s. c 4 s 1028 (uncodified) is amended to read as follows:

**FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

Rapid Housing Improvement Program (30000863)

The reappropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations:

(1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, the reappropriation is subject to the provisions of section 1010, chapter 35, Laws of 2016 sp. sess.

(2) The department may use the reappropriation to implement this act.

Reappropriation:

Washington Housing Trust Account—State $194,000

Prior Biennia (Expenditures) $31,000

Future Biennia (Projected Costs) $0

TOTAL $225,000

**Sec.**  RCW 36.22.178 and 2011 c 110 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

The surcharge provided for in this section shall be named the affordable housing for all surcharge.

(1) Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, a surcharge of ((~~ten~~)) thirteen dollars per instrument shall be charged by the county auditor for each document recorded, which will be in addition to any other charge authorized by law. The county may retain up to five percent of these funds collected solely for the collection, administration, and local distribution of these funds. Of the remaining funds, forty percent of the revenue generated through this surcharge will be transmitted monthly to the state treasurer who will deposit: (a) The portion of the funds attributable to ten dollars of the surcharge into the affordable housing for all account created in RCW 43.185C.190. The department of commerce must use these funds to provide housing and shelter for extremely low-income households, including but not limited to housing for victims of human trafficking and their families and grants for building operation and maintenance costs of housing projects or units within housing projects that are affordable to extremely low-income households with incomes at or below thirty percent of the area median income, and that require a supplement to rent income to cover ongoing operating expenses; and (b) the portion of the funds attributable to three dollars of the surcharge into the landlord mitigation program account created in section 3 of this act.

(2) All of the remaining funds generated by this surcharge will be retained by the county and be deposited into a fund that must be used by the county and its cities and towns for eligible housing activities as described in this subsection that serve very low-income households with incomes at or below fifty percent of the area median income. The portion of the surcharge retained by a county shall be allocated to eligible housing activities that serve extremely low and very low-income households in the county and the cities within a county according to an interlocal agreement between the county and the cities within the county consistent with countywide and local housing needs and policies. A priority must be given to eligible housing activities that serve extremely low-income households with incomes at or below thirty percent of the area median income. Eligible housing activities to be funded by these county funds are limited to:

(a) Acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of housing projects or units within housing projects that are affordable to very low-income households with incomes at or below fifty percent of the area median income, including units for homeownership, rental units, seasonal and permanent farmworker housing units, units reserved for victims of human trafficking and their families, and single room occupancy units;

(b) Supporting building operation and maintenance costs of housing projects or units within housing projects eligible to receive housing trust funds, that are affordable to very low-income households with incomes at or below fifty percent of the area median income, and that require a supplement to rent income to cover ongoing operating expenses;

(c) Rental assistance vouchers for housing units that are affordable to very low-income households with incomes at or below fifty percent of the area median income, including rental housing vouchers for victims of human trafficking and their families, to be administered by a local public housing authority or other local organization that has an existing rental assistance voucher program, consistent with or similar to the United States department of housing and urban development's section 8 rental assistance voucher program standards; and

(d) Operating costs for emergency shelters and licensed overnight youth shelters.

(3) The surcharge imposed in this section does not apply to assignments or substitutions of previously recorded deeds of trust.

**--- END ---**