

ASSEMBLY, No. 2514

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY

District 7 (Burlington)

Assemblywoman GABRIELA M. MOSQUERA

District 4 (Camden and Gloucester)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblyman Webber

SYNOPSIS

Provides rental and lease protections for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 7/2/2020)

1 AN ACT concerning certain lease agreements, amending and
2 supplementing various parts of the statutory law.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. (New section) a. A landlord may not terminate a tenancy,
8 fail to renew a tenancy, or refuse to enter into a rental agreement
9 based on the tenant's or applicant's or a household member's status
10 as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, or
11 based on the tenant or applicant having terminated a rental
12 agreement pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2008, c.111 (C.46:8-9.6).

13 b. Subsection a. shall apply if the tenant provides the landlord
14 with any of the following:

15 (1) a copy of a permanent restraining order issued by a court
16 pursuant to section 13 of "the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act
17 of 1991," P.L.1991, c.261 (C.2C:25-29);

18 (2) a copy of a permanent restraining order from another
19 jurisdiction, issued pursuant to the jurisdiction's laws concerning
20 domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;

21 (3) a law enforcement agency record documenting the domestic
22 violence, or certifying that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a
23 victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;

24 (4) medical documentation of the domestic violence, sexual
25 assault, or stalking provided by a health care provider;

26 (5) certification, provided by a certified Domestic Violence
27 Specialist, or the director of a designated domestic violence agency,
28 that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a victim of domestic
29 violence; or

30 (6) other documentation or certification, provided by a licensed
31 social worker, that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a victim of
32 domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

33 c. A landlord who refuses to enter into a rental agreement in
34 violation of this section may be liable to the tenant or applicant in a
35 civil action for damages sustained by the tenant or applicant. The
36 prevailing party may also recover court costs and reasonable
37 attorneys' fees.

38 d. It shall be a defense to any action to remove a tenant under
39 Chapter 18 of Title 2A that the action to remove the tenant and
40 recover possession of the premises is in violation of subsection a. of
41 this section.

42 e. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit adverse
43 housing decisions based upon other lawful factors within the
44 landlord's knowledge.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 2. N.J.S.2A:18-53 is amended to read as follows:

2 2A:18-53. Except for residential lessees and tenants included in
3 section 2 of this act, any lessee or tenant at will or at sufferance, or
4 for a part of a year, or for one or more years, of any houses,
5 buildings, lands or tenements, and the assigns, undertenants or legal
6 representatives of such tenant or lessee, may be removed from such
7 premises by the Superior Court, Law Division, Special Civil Part in
8 an action in the following cases:

9 a. Where such person holds over and continues in possession
10 of all or any part of the demised premises after the expiration of his
11 term, and after demand made and written notice given by the
12 landlord or his agent, for delivery of possession thereof. The notice
13 shall be served either personally upon the tenant or such person in
14 possession by giving him a copy thereof or by leaving a copy of the
15 same at his usual place of abode with a member of his family above
16 the age of 14 years.

17 b. Where such person shall hold over after a default in the
18 payment of rent, pursuant to the agreement under which the
19 premises are held.

20 c. Where such person (1) shall be so disorderly as to destroy
21 the peace and quiet of the landlord or the other tenants or occupants
22 living in said house or the neighborhood, or (2) shall willfully
23 destroy, damage or injure the premises, or (3) shall constantly
24 violate the landlord's rules and regulations governing said premises,
25 provided, such rules have been accepted in writing by the tenant or
26 are made a part of the lease; or (4) shall commit any breach or
27 violation of any of the covenants or agreements in the nature
28 thereof contained in the lease for the premises where a right of re-
29 entry is reserved in the lease for a violation of such covenants or
30 agreements, and shall hold over and continue in possession of the
31 demised premises or any part thereof, after the landlord or his agent
32 for that purpose has caused a written notice of the termination of
33 said tenancy to be served upon said tenant, and a demand that said
34 tenant remove from said premises within three days from the
35 service of such notice. The notice shall specify the cause of the
36 termination of the tenancy, and shall be served either personally
37 upon the tenant or such person in possession by giving him a copy
38 thereof, or by leaving a copy thereof at his usual place of abode
39 with some member of his family above the age of 14 years.

40 Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize the
41 removal of a lessee or tenant or the assigns, under-tenants or legal
42 representatives of such lessee or tenant from any house, building,
43 mobile home or land in a mobile home park or tenement leased for
44 residential purposes based upon such person's status as a victim of
45 domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

46 (cf: P.L.1991, c.91, s.64)

1 3. Section 2 of P.L.1974, c.49 (C.2A:18-61.1) is amended to
2 read as follows:

3 2. No lessee or tenant or the assigns, under-tenants or legal
4 representatives of such lessee or tenant may be removed by the
5 Superior Court from any house, building, mobile home or land in a
6 mobile home park or tenement leased for residential purposes, other
7 than (1) owner-occupied premises with not more than two rental
8 units or a hotel, motel or other guest house or part thereof rented to
9 a transient guest or seasonal tenant; (2) a dwelling unit which is
10 held in trust on behalf of a member of the immediate family of the
11 person or persons establishing the trust, provided that the member
12 of the immediate family on whose behalf the trust is established
13 permanently occupies the unit; and (3) a dwelling unit which is
14 permanently occupied by a member of the immediate family of the
15 owner of that unit, provided, however, that exception (2) or (3) shall
16 apply only in cases in which the member of the immediate family
17 has a developmental disability, except upon establishment of one of
18 the following grounds as good cause:

19 a. The person fails to pay rent due and owing under the lease
20 whether the same be oral or written; provided that, for the purposes
21 of this section, any portion of rent unpaid by a tenant to a landlord
22 but utilized by the tenant to continue utility service to the rental
23 premises after receiving notice from an electric, gas, water or sewer
24 public utility that such service was in danger of discontinuance
25 based on nonpayment by the landlord, shall not be deemed to be
26 unpaid rent.

27 b. The person has continued to be, after written notice to cease,
28 so disorderly as to destroy the peace and quiet of the occupants or
29 other tenants living in said house or neighborhood.

30 c. The person has willfully or by reason of gross negligence
31 caused or allowed destruction, damage or injury to the premises.

32 d. The person has continued, after written notice to cease, to
33 substantially violate or breach any of the landlord's rules and
34 regulations governing said premises, provided such rules and
35 regulations are reasonable and have been accepted in writing by the
36 tenant or made a part of the lease at the beginning of the lease term.

37 e. (1) The person has continued, after written notice to cease,
38 to substantially violate or breach any of the covenants or
39 agreements contained in the lease for the premises where a right of
40 reentry is reserved to the landlord in the lease for a violation of such
41 covenant or agreement, provided that such covenant or agreement is
42 reasonable and was contained in the lease at the beginning of the
43 lease term.

44 (2) In public housing under the control of a public housing
45 authority or redevelopment agency, the person has substantially
46 violated or breached any of the covenants or agreements contained
47 in the lease for the premises pertaining to illegal uses of controlled
48 dangerous substances, or other illegal activities, whether or not a
49 right of reentry is reserved to the landlord in the lease for a

1 violation of such covenant or agreement, provided that such
2 covenant or agreement conforms to federal guidelines regarding
3 such lease provisions and was contained in the lease at the
4 beginning of the lease term.

5 f. The person has failed to pay rent after a valid notice to quit
6 and notice of increase of said rent, provided the increase in rent is
7 not unconscionable and complies with any and all other laws or
8 municipal ordinances governing rent increases.

9 g. The landlord or owner (1) seeks to permanently board up or
10 demolish the premises because he has been cited by local or State
11 housing inspectors for substantial violations affecting the health and
12 safety of tenants and it is economically unfeasible for the owner to
13 eliminate the violations; (2) seeks to comply with local or State
14 housing inspectors who have cited him for substantial violations
15 affecting the health and safety of tenants and it is unfeasible to so
16 comply without removing the tenant; simultaneously with service of
17 notice of eviction pursuant to this clause, the landlord shall notify
18 the Department of Community Affairs of the intention to institute
19 proceedings and shall provide the department with such other
20 information as it may require pursuant to rules and regulations. The
21 department shall inform all parties and the court of its view with
22 respect to the feasibility of compliance without removal of the
23 tenant and may in its discretion appear and present evidence; (3)
24 seeks to correct an illegal occupancy because he has been cited by
25 local or State housing inspectors or zoning officers and it is
26 unfeasible to correct such illegal occupancy without removing the
27 tenant; or (4) is a governmental agency which seeks to permanently
28 retire the premises from the rental market pursuant to a
29 redevelopment or land clearance plan in a blighted area. In those
30 cases where the tenant is being removed for any reason specified in
31 this subsection, no warrant for possession shall be issued until
32 P.L.1967, c.79 (C.52:31B-1 et seq.) and P.L.1971, c.362 (C.20:4-1
33 et seq.) have been complied with.

34 h. The owner seeks to retire permanently the residential
35 building or the mobile home park from residential use or use as a
36 mobile home park, provided this subsection shall not apply to
37 circumstances covered under subsection g. of this section.

38 i. The landlord or owner proposes, at the termination of a
39 lease, reasonable changes of substance in the terms and conditions
40 of the lease, including specifically any change in the term thereof,
41 which the tenant, after written notice, refuses to accept; provided
42 that in cases where a tenant has received a notice of termination
43 pursuant to subsection g. of section 3 of P.L.1974, c.49 (C.2A:18-
44 61.2), or has a protected tenancy status pursuant to the "Senior
45 Citizens and Disabled Protected Tenancy Act," P.L.1981, c.226
46 (C.2A:18-61.22 et al.), or pursuant to the "Tenant Protection Act of
47 1992," P.L.1991, c.509 (C.2A:18-61.40 et al.), the landlord or
48 owner shall have the burden of proving that any change in the terms
49 and conditions of the lease, rental or regulations both is reasonable

1 and does not substantially reduce the rights and privileges to which
2 the tenant was entitled prior to the conversion.

3 j. The person, after written notice to cease, has habitually and
4 without legal justification failed to pay rent which is due and owing.

5 k. The landlord or owner of the building or mobile home park
6 is converting from the rental market to a condominium, cooperative
7 or fee simple ownership of two or more dwelling units or park sites,
8 except as hereinafter provided in subsection l. of this section.
9 Where the tenant is being removed pursuant to this subsection, no
10 warrant for possession shall be issued until this act has been
11 complied with. No action for possession shall be brought pursuant
12 to this subsection against a senior citizen tenant or disabled tenant
13 with protected tenancy status pursuant to the "Senior Citizens and
14 Disabled Protected Tenancy Act," P.L.1981, c.226 (C.2A:18-61.22
15 et al.), or against a qualified tenant under the "Tenant Protection
16 Act of 1992," P.L.1991, c.509 (C.2A:18-61.40 et al.), as long as the
17 agency has not terminated the protected tenancy status or the
18 protected tenancy period has not expired.

19 l. (1) The owner of a building or mobile home park, which is
20 constructed as or being converted to a condominium, cooperative or
21 fee simple ownership, seeks to evict a tenant or sublessee whose
22 initial tenancy began after the master deed, agreement establishing
23 the cooperative or subdivision plat was recorded, because the owner
24 has contracted to sell the unit to a buyer who seeks to personally
25 occupy it and the contract for sale calls for the unit to be vacant at
26 the time of closing. However, no action shall be brought against a
27 tenant under paragraph (1) of this subsection unless the tenant was
28 given a statement in accordance with section 6 of P.L.1975, c.311
29 (C.2A:18-61.9);

30 (2) The owner of three or less condominium or cooperative units
31 seeks to evict a tenant whose initial tenancy began by rental from an
32 owner of three or less units after the master deed or agreement
33 establishing the cooperative was recorded, because the owner seeks
34 to personally occupy the unit, or has contracted to sell the unit to a
35 buyer who seeks to personally occupy it and the contract for sale
36 calls for the unit to be vacant at the time of closing;

37 (3) The owner of a building of three residential units or less
38 seeks to personally occupy a unit, or has contracted to sell the
39 residential unit to a buyer who wishes to personally occupy it and
40 the contract for sale calls for the unit to be vacant at the time of
41 closing.

42 m. The landlord or owner conditioned the tenancy upon and in
43 consideration for the tenant's employment by the landlord or owner
44 as superintendent, janitor or in some other capacity and such
45 employment is being terminated.

46 n. The person has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to, or if a
47 juvenile, has been adjudicated delinquent on the basis of an act
48 which if committed by an adult would constitute an offense under

1 the "Comprehensive Drug Reform Act of 1987," N.J.S.2C:35-1 et
2 al. involving the use, possession, manufacture, dispensing or
3 distribution of a controlled dangerous substance, controlled
4 dangerous substance analog or drug paraphernalia within the
5 meaning of that act within or upon the leased premises or the
6 building or complex of buildings and land appurtenant thereto, or
7 the mobile home park, in which those premises are located, and has
8 not in connection with his sentence for that offense either (1)
9 successfully completed or (2) been admitted to and continued upon
10 probation while completing, a drug rehabilitation program pursuant
11 to N.J.S.2C:35-14; or, being the tenant or lessee of such leased
12 premises, knowingly harbors or harbored therein a person who has
13 been so convicted or has so pleaded, or otherwise permits or
14 permitted such a person to occupy those premises for residential
15 purposes, whether continuously or intermittently, except that this
16 subsection shall not apply to a person harboring or permitting a
17 juvenile to occupy the premises if the juvenile has been adjudicated
18 delinquent upon the basis of an act which if committed by an adult
19 would constitute the offense of use or possession under the said act.
20 No action for removal may be brought pursuant to this subsection
21 more than two years after the date of the adjudication or conviction
22 or more than two years after the person's release from incarceration
23 whichever is the later.

24 o. The person has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to, or if a
25 juvenile, has been adjudicated delinquent on the basis of an act
26 which if committed by an adult would constitute an offense under
27 N.J.S.2C:12-1 or N.J.S.2C:12-3 involving assault, or terroristic
28 threats against the landlord, a member of the landlord's family or an
29 employee of the landlord; or, being the tenant or lessee of such
30 leased premises, knowingly harbors or harbored therein a person
31 who has been so convicted or has so pleaded, or otherwise permits
32 or permitted such a person to occupy those premises for residential
33 purposes, whether continuously or intermittently. No action for
34 removal may be brought pursuant to this subsection more than two
35 years after the adjudication or conviction or more than two years
36 after the person's release from incarceration whichever is the later.

37 p. The person has been found, by a preponderance of the
38 evidence, liable in a civil action for removal commenced under this
39 act for an offense under N.J.S.2C:20-1 et al. involving theft of
40 property located on the leased premises from the landlord, the
41 leased premises or other tenants residing in the leased premises, or
42 N.J.S.2C:12-1 or N.J.S.2C:12-3 involving assault or terroristic
43 threats against the landlord, a member of the landlord's family or an
44 employee of the landlord, or under the "Comprehensive Drug
45 Reform Act of 1987," N.J.S.2C:35-1 et al., involving the use,
46 possession, manufacture, dispensing or distribution of a controlled
47 dangerous substance, controlled dangerous substance analog or drug
48 paraphernalia within the meaning of that act within or upon the

1 leased premises or the building or complex of buildings and land
2 appurtenant thereto, or the mobile home park, in which those
3 premises are located, and has not in connection with his sentence
4 for that offense either (1) successfully completed or (2) been
5 admitted to and continued upon probation while completing a drug
6 rehabilitation program pursuant to N.J.S.2C:35-14; or, being the
7 tenant or lessee of such leased premises, knowingly harbors or
8 harbored therein a person who committed such an offense, or
9 otherwise permits or permitted such a person to occupy those
10 premises for residential purposes, whether continuously or
11 intermittently, except that this subsection shall not apply to a person
12 who harbors or permits a juvenile to occupy the premises if the
13 juvenile has been adjudicated delinquent upon the basis of an act
14 which if committed by an adult would constitute the offense of use
15 or possession under the said "Comprehensive Drug Reform Act of
16 1987."

17 q. The person has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to, or if a
18 juvenile, has been adjudicated delinquent on the basis of an act
19 which if committed by an adult would constitute an offense under
20 N.J.S.2C:20-1 et al. involving theft of property from the landlord,
21 the leased premises or other tenants residing in the same building or
22 complex; or, being the tenant or lessee of such leased premises,
23 knowingly harbors therein a person who has been so convicted or
24 has so pleaded, or otherwise permits such a person to occupy those
25 premises for residential purposes, whether continuously or
26 intermittently.

27 r. The person is found in a civil action, by a preponderance of
28 the evidence, to have committed a violation of the human
29 trafficking provisions set forth in section 1 of P.L.2005, c.77
30 (C.2C:13-8) within or upon the leased premises or the building or
31 complex of buildings and land appurtenant thereto, or the mobile
32 home park, in which those premises are located; or, being the tenant
33 or lessee of such leased premises, knowingly harbors or harbored
34 therein a person who has been engaged in human trafficking, or
35 otherwise permits or permitted such a person to occupy those
36 premises for residential purposes, whether continuously or
37 intermittently. No action for removal may be brought pursuant to
38 this subsection more than two years after the alleged violation has
39 terminated. A criminal conviction or a guilty plea to a crime of
40 human trafficking under section 1 of P.L.2005, c.77 (C.2C:13-8)
41 shall be considered prima facie evidence of civil liability under this
42 subsection.

43 For purposes of this section, (1) "developmental disability"
44 means any disability which is defined as such pursuant to section 3
45 of P.L.1977, c.82 (C.30:6D-3); (2) "member of the immediate
46 family" means a person's spouse, parent, child or sibling, or a
47 spouse, parent, child or sibling of any of them; and (3)
48 "permanently" occupies or occupied means that the occupant

1 maintains no other domicile at which the occupant votes, pays rent
2 or property taxes or at which rent or property taxes are paid on the
3 occupant's behalf.

4 Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize the
5 removal of a lessee or tenant or the assigns, under-tenants or legal
6 representatives of such lessee or tenant from any house, building,
7 mobile home or land in a mobile home park or tenement leased for
8 residential purposes based upon such person's status as a victim of
9 domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

10 (cf: P.L.2013, c.51, s.7)

11
12 4. Section 3 of P.L.2008, c.111 (C.46:8-9.6) is amended to read
13 as follows:

14 3. The tenant may terminate any lease of a residential property
15 that has been leased and used by the tenant solely for the purpose of
16 providing a dwelling place for the tenant, or for the tenant's family,
17 prior to the expiration date thereof, if the tenant fulfills all
18 requirements and procedures as established by P.L.2008, c.111
19 (C.46:8-9.4 et al.) and provides the landlord with:

20 a. written notice that the tenant or a child of the tenant faces an
21 imminent threat of serious physical harm from another named
22 person if the tenant remains on the leased premises; and

23 b. any of the following:

24 (1) a **【certified】** copy of a permanent restraining order issued by
25 a court pursuant to section 13 of "The Prevention of Domestic
26 Violence Act of 1991," P.L.1991, c.261 (C.2C:25-29), and
27 protecting the tenant from the person named in the written notice;

28 (2) a **【certified】** copy of a permanent restraining order from
29 another jurisdiction, issued pursuant to the jurisdiction's laws
30 concerning domestic violence, and protecting the tenant from the
31 person named in the written notice;

32 (3) a law enforcement agency record documenting the domestic
33 violence, or certifying that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a
34 victim of domestic violence;

35 (4) medical documentation of the domestic violence provided by
36 a health care provider;

37 (5) certification, provided by a certified Domestic Violence
38 Specialist, or the director of a designated domestic violence agency,
39 that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a victim of domestic
40 violence; or

41 (6) other documentation or certification, provided by a licensed
42 social worker, that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a victim of
43 domestic violence.

44 (cf: P.L.2008, c.111, s.3)

45
46 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill would provide rental and lease protections for domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking victims. Under the bill, a landlord may not terminate a tenancy, fail to renew a tenancy, or refuse to enter into a rental agreement based on the tenant's or applicant's or a household member's status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, or based on the tenant or applicant having terminated a rental agreement pursuant to the "New Jersey Safe Housing Act," P.L.2008, c.111 (C.46:8-9.4 et seq.). Under the "New Jersey Safe Housing Act," a tenant may terminate a lease prior to its expiration if the tenant provides written notice that the tenant or a child of the tenant faces an imminent threat of serious physical harm from another person if the tenant remains on the premises, and provides appropriate documentation.

The bill provides for the same documentation requirements as those set out in the "New Jersey Safe Housing Act." The documentation may be any of the following:

- (1) a copy of a permanent domestic violence restraining order;
 - (2) a copy of a permanent restraining order from another jurisdiction, issued pursuant to the jurisdiction's laws concerning domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;
 - (3) a law enforcement agency record documenting the domestic violence, or certifying that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;
 - (4) medical documentation of the domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking provided by a health care provider;
 - (5) certification, provided by a certified Domestic Violence Specialist, or the director of a designated domestic violence agency, that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a victim of domestic violence;
- or
- (6) other documentation or certification, provided by a licensed social worker, that the tenant or a child of the tenant is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Under the bill, a landlord who refuses to enter into a rental agreement in violation of this section may be liable to the tenant or applicant in a civil action for damages sustained by the tenant or applicant. The prevailing party may also recover court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees.

The bill amends N.J.S.A.2A:18-53 and N.J.S.A.2A:18-61.1, which concern actions by landlords to remove tenants, to provide that these sections of law shall not be construed to authorize the removal of a lessee or tenant or the assigns, under-tenants or legal representatives of such lessee or tenant from any house, building, mobile home or land in a mobile home park or tenement leased for residential purposes based upon such person's status as a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.