



Testimony of Mary Lee Kiernan, President & CEO of YWCA Greenwich,
on behalf of the Board of Directors of YWCA Greenwich
Before the Connecticut General Assembly
Joint Committee on Judiciary
April 19, 2019

In support of:

S.B.693 – AN ACT CONCERNING ADDITIONAL HOUSING PROTECTIONS FOR A VICTIM OF FAMILY VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT.

Senators Bergstein, Kissel, and Winfield and Representatives Blumenthal, Rebimbas and Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for your consideration of S.B 693, which seeks to provide additional housing-related protections for victims of family violence or sexual assault.

YWCA Greenwich is one of the 18 statewide organizations that make up the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In FY'18, 38,192 victims of domestic violence were served by these 18 organizations.

Domestic violence is the number one violent crime and the second most investigated crime in Greenwich. YWCA Greenwich provides its services free of charge to victims participating in our programs. Services include a 24/7 hotline, crisis intervention, group and individual counseling, emergency shelter, civil and criminal court advocacy, and financial counseling. Education, professional training, community awareness and prevention programs are also critical components of the programs delivered by YWCA Domestic Abuse Services.

S.B. 693 would require landlords to change the locks on the individual dwelling unit of a survivor of domestic or sexual violence when they have a court-issued restraining or protective order, or civil protection order. The landlord would have two business days to comply with the request to change locks, and the landlord will be permitted to charge the actual reasonable cost of the lock back to the tenant. Additional protections are included for both the tenant (e.g., may change the locks themselves if the landlord does not comply) and landlord (e.g. may deduct the actual reasonable cost from the security deposit if the tenant does not pay for the lock changes).

*National Housing Law Project: HOUSING RIGHTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS A STATE AND LOCAL LAW COMPENDIUM - 2013

The requirement of changing the locks on the door for a person under protective court order will help protect the victim against further assault and provide at least some sense of security within the home. Asking landlords to take this step to protect their tenants is a reasonable request. Several states* (Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Washington) and Washington, DC have laws requiring lock changes for survivors in certain circumstances. Currently nothing in Connecticut law requires a landlord to change the locks of an individual dwelling unit at the request of a tenant when their safety is threatened. We ask you to take a trauma-informed approach to reviewing this bill and consider the additional trauma and anxiety that results when a victim continues to be threatened or harassed by an abuser.

We respectfully urge the Judiciary Committee to support S.B. 693 out of Committee and support its passage by the full General Assembly.

Thank you for your consideration.