

Housing Committee

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
H.B. 5244: *An Act Concerning Additional Housing Protections for a Victim of Family Violence
or Sexual Assault*

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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-six years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security and combat discrimination at work.

Through CWEALF's Legal Education Program, we also provide information, education, referrals, and bilingual advocacy to the Connecticut community to ensure that all individuals in our state have access to legal justice. The majority of CWEALF's clients are low-income women with at least one dependent, many of whom have experienced domestic or family violence.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support H.B. 5244: *An Act Concerning Additional Housing Protections for a Victim of Family Violence or Sexual Assault*, which will require landlords, at the cost of the tenant, to change the locks on the individual dwelling unit of a survivor of domestic violence or sexual violence when they have a court-issued restraining order or protective order, or civil protection order.

Current Connecticut law does not require a landlord to change the locks of an individual dwelling unit at the request of a tenant when their safety is threatened. It is often frightening for a survivor who has been granted a court order of protection to know that the person who is abusing them still has easy access to their home, despite a court's recognition that this person poses a serious risk to their safety.

House Bill No. 5244 will require landlords to change locks in these limited circumstances, which provides a meaningful measure of safety and peace of mind for survivors. Several states (Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, and Washington) and Washington D.C. have passed laws requiring lock changes for survivors in certain circumstances. We urge the Committee to support this bill and add Connecticut to that list.