

Ellen and her daughter
could be
sued for
renting a
home.



Ask your State Representative to PROTECT Tenants & PASS HF 1613

Low Vacancy Rates, High Cost of Housing Searches:

Today, rental vacancy rates are at an all-time low of 1.5 percent in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. For low income families, affordable housing is even more scarce. At the same, landlords, under the increasing pressures of new municipal public safety regulations, are carefully screening prospective tenants. While most landlords treat their tenants with fairness and respect, there are some who take this market opportunity to prey on the poor. For example, a low income family in search of new housing can spend 25 percent or more of their monthly income on application fees that are used for tenant screening. Since Minnesota does not regulate these fees charged by screening companies, which can be as high as \$35 per adult, some landlords pass on these fees to applicants with a significant markup, even at times when they have no units available.

A Good Bill with a Bad Provision:

To help rid Minnesota of these immoral practices, the Minnesota House is considering **HF 1613**. This bill caps tenant screening fees to the rates charged by screening services (Section 1.1) and restricts landlords from accepting applications only when units are available (Sec. 1.2). Landlords who violate these sections are liable to the applicants for the original application fee, a civil penalty up to \$100, civil court costs and reasonable attorney fees (Sec. 1.5A).

Unfortunately, the same provision that protects applicants, also gives landlords the right to sue applicants for providing incorrect information on their applications (Sec. 1.5B). Rampant errors found in tenant screening reports, contested eviction notices and many other problems can often be the source of this incorrect information. An applicant's ignorance can result in financially-crippling legal problems.

In this tight housing market, landlords have the power to pick between applicants simply based on their credit and screening reports. These frivolous civil suits should not be filed unless there's proof that they intentionally lied on the application. **Section 1.5B must be amended as so or removed from the bill.**

Call Your State Representative:

Now is the time to act. HF 1613 has passed through committee and is being prepared for a full vote. **Urge your state representative to remove the false information provision (1.5B) and pass HF 1613.** To identify your state representative, please call the Minnesota House of Representatives at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550 or visit this Internet address:

<http://www.mary.org/hf1613>

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