

# STATE OF NEW YORK

281

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 9, 2019

Introduced by Sen. ORTT -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Social Services

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to allowing public welfare officials to withhold payment of rent to landlords who owe delinquent tax liabilities to local municipalities, school districts or counties

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Section 143-b of the social services law, as added by chapter 997 of the laws of 1962, subdivisions 5 and 6 as amended by chapter 701 of the laws of 1965, is amended to read as follows:

2 § 143-b. Avoidance of abuses in connection with rent checks. 1. Whenever a recipient of public assistance and care is eligible for or entitled to receive aid or assistance in the form of a payment for or toward the rental of any housing accommodations occupied by such recipient or ~~his~~ recipient's family, such payment may be made directly by the public welfare department to the landlord.

3 2. Every public welfare official shall have power to and may withhold the payment of any such rent in any case where ~~he~~ such official has knowledge that there exists or there is outstanding any violation of law in respect to the building containing the housing accommodations occupied by the person entitled to such assistance which is dangerous, hazardous ~~or~~ , detrimental to life or health, or where the landlord of such housing accommodations owes delinquent tax liabilities to local municipalities, school districts or counties. A report of each such violation or delinquent tax liability shall be made to the appropriate public welfare department by the appropriate department or agency having jurisdiction over such violations or delinquent tax liabilities.

4 3. Every public welfare official shall have the power to initiate or to request the recipient to initiate before the appropriate housing rent

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets ~~[-]~~ is old law to be omitted.

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1 commission any proper proceeding for the reduction of maximum rents  
2 applicable to any housing accommodation occupied by a person entitled to  
3 assistance in the form of a rent payment whenever such official has  
4 knowledge that essential services which such person is entitled to  
5 receive are not being maintained by the landlord or have been substan-  
6 tially reduced by the landlord.

7 4. The public welfare department may obtain and maintain current  
8 records of violations in buildings where welfare recipients reside which  
9 relate to conditions which are dangerous, hazardous [~~or~~], detrimental to  
10 life or health, or where the landlord of such housing accommodations  
11 owes delinquent tax liabilities to local municipalities, school  
12 districts or counties.

13 5. (a) It shall be a valid defense in any action or summary proceeding  
14 against a welfare recipient for non-payment of rent to show existing  
15 violations in the building wherein such welfare recipient resides which  
16 relate to conditions which are dangerous, hazardous [~~or~~], detrimental to  
17 life or health, or the landlord of such housing accommodations owes  
18 delinquent tax liabilities to local municipalities, school districts or  
19 counties as the basis for non-payment.

20 (b) In any such action or proceeding the plaintiff or landlord shall  
21 not be entitled to an order or judgment awarding him possession of the  
22 premises or providing for removal of the tenant, or to a money judgment  
23 against the tenant, on the basis of non-payment of rent for any period  
24 during which there was outstanding any violation of law relating to  
25 dangerous or hazardous conditions or conditions detrimental to life or  
26 health or the landlord of such housing accommodations owed delinquent  
27 tax liabilities to local municipalities, school districts or counties.  
28 For the purposes of this paragraph such violation of law shall be deemed  
29 to have been removed and no longer outstanding upon the date when the  
30 condition constituting a violation was actually corrected, such date to  
31 be determined by the court upon satisfactory proof submitted by the  
32 plaintiff or landlord.

33 (c) The defenses provided herein in relation to an action or proceed-  
34 ing against a welfare recipient for non-payment of rent shall apply only  
35 with respect to violations or delinquent tax liabilities reported to the  
36 appropriate public welfare department by the appropriate department or  
37 agency having jurisdiction over such violations or delinquent tax  
38 liabilities.

39 6. Nothing in this section shall prevent the public welfare department  
40 from making provision for payment of the rent which was withheld pursu-  
41 ant to this section upon proof satisfactory to it that the condition  
42 constituting a violation was actually corrected or delinquent tax  
43 liabilities owed to local municipalities, school districts or counties  
44 were paid. Where rents were reduced by order of the appropriate rent  
45 commission, the public welfare department may make provision for payment  
46 of the reduced rent in conformity with such order.

47 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.