

STATE OF NEW YORK

4657

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 19, 2019

Introduced by Sen. HOYLMAN -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Codes

AN ACT to amend the civil rights law, in relation to the right to call for police and emergency assistance and providing victim protections

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

1 Section 1. Article 9 and sections 90 and 91 of the civil rights law,
2 as renumbered by chapter 310 of the laws of 1962, are renumbered article
3 10 and sections 100 and 101, and a new article 9 is added to read as
4 follows:

ARTICLE 9

RIGHT TO CALL POLICE AND EMERGENCY

ASSISTANCE/VICTIM PROTECTIONS

Section 90. Legislative findings.

9 91. Right to call for police and emergency assistance; victim
10 protections.

11 92. Protections not applicable to breaches of lease, illicit
12 activities or other violations of law.

13 93. Right of property owners to be free of penalty for respect-
14 ing the rights of an occupant to request police or emer-
15 gency assistance.

16 94. Limitation on right to request police or emergency assist-
17 ance prohibited.

18 95. Defenses.

19 96. Removal of the perpetrator of violence while assuring
20 continued occupancy by victim.

21 97. Remedies.

22 98. Guidance authorized.

23 § 90. Legislative findings. No victim of domestic violence, or other
24 person threatened with violence or in jeopardy of harm, should fail to
25 access police or emergency assistance when needed because of the fear

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

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1 that doing so may result in losing their housing through eviction or
2 other actions to remove them from the property. Some local laws or poli-
3 cies have the effect of treating such requests for police or emergency
4 aid as a disturbance constituting a "public nuisance" or otherwise
5 treating the individual faced with the violence and in need of assist-
6 ance as an undesirable tenant or undesirable influence on the neighbor-
7 hood based upon a call for help to their home. Legislation is needed to
8 assure that victims of violence or threats of harm or violence are not
9 penalized in relation to any law enforcement activity and intervention
10 necessary to address offender accountability and victim safety.

11 Municipalities throughout the state have increasingly begun to adopt
12 local laws and ordinances to address public nuisances or other intru-
13 sions on the quiet enjoyment of their residents and communities. Despite
14 their intent to aid communities, overly broad ordinances have instead
15 had a harmful chilling effect deterring victims of violence and crime
16 from accessing police assistance and have jeopardized public safety.
17 Given the negative impact that certain provisions have on the community
18 at large, and to victims of crime in particular, remedial legislation is
19 necessary that will both protect the rights of domestic violence and
20 crime victims to access essential police assistance, as well as preserve
21 the locality's right to address conduct that may undermine the communi-
22 ty's safety or integrity.

23 The legislature therefore finds that it is desirable to clarify the
24 law in this area in order to protect women and others from violence and
25 crime.

26 The legislature further finds that there is a need to assure that
27 victims of violence, including persons threatened with harm or violence,
28 have a clear right to access assistance to protect personal or public
29 safety.

30 The legislature finally finds that clarification in this area will
31 advance the state's interest in stopping crime and further the aims of
32 penal laws that depend on citizens to report incidents of crime to law
33 enforcement.

34 With this remedial legislation the legislature specifically intends
35 that the coverage of this article includes, but is not limited to, laws
36 or ordinances that use any form of cumulative point system for the
37 purpose of identifying any persons or properties who or which would be
38 subject to municipal enforcement action.

39 § 91. Right to call for police and emergency assistance; victim
40 protections. 1. Any person who is a victim of domestic violence, as
41 defined in section four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law,
42 or who otherwise believes he or she is in need of police or emergency
43 assistance has the right to request such assistance and to be free of
44 any direct or indirect penalty or reprisal for accessing assistance, or
45 because he or she resides at a property where domestic violence or other
46 law enforcement activity occurred. Other than as provided in section
47 ninety-two of this article, no victim of conduct which has been used as
48 the grounds for the application of a local law or ordinance established
49 for the purpose of regulating nuisances shall be directly or indirectly
50 penalized, or otherwise subject to reprisal by application of such local
51 law, including by termination or refusal to renew a tenancy or by
52 eviction.

53 2. No residential occupant shall be required, either orally or in
54 writing, to waive rights under this article, and any such waiver shall
55 be void and unenforceable.

1 § 92. Protections not applicable to breaches of lease, illicit activ-
2 ities or other violations of law. The protections of this article shall
3 not be deemed to prohibit a municipality from enforcing an ordinance or
4 local law, nor restrict a landlord from terminating, evicting or refus-
5 ing to renew a tenancy, when such action is premised upon grounds other
6 than access of police or emergency assistance or is otherwise premised
7 on conduct unrelated to the residential occupant's status as a target or
8 victim of violence or harm.

9 § 93. Right of property owners to be free of penalty for respecting
10 the rights of an occupant to request police or emergency assistance. No
11 landlord or other property owner shall be subject to fines or loss of
12 permits or licenses by a municipality for failing to take steps to
13 remove an occupant who has exercised rights under this article.

14 § 94. Limitation on right to request police or emergency assistance
15 prohibited. A municipality, municipal authority, landlord or property
16 owner shall not prohibit, restrict, penalize or in any other way direct-
17 ly or indirectly limit any person's exercise of rights under this arti-
18 cle. The protections of this prohibition shall extend to any residential
19 occupant upon whose behalf a third party has called for police or emer-
20 gency assistance.

21 § 95. Defenses. 1. It is a defense to any judicial or administrative
22 action or proceeding taken by any municipality or municipal authority
23 enforcing any local law or ordinance that the enforcement action direct-
24 ly or indirectly penalizes a residential occupant or property owner for
25 the exercise of rights under this article. Prior to initiation of any
26 such enforcement action or proceeding all parties and any residential
27 occupant that may be so impacted shall be given written notice by the
28 municipality of the protections of this article and shall have the right
29 to be heard in the action or proceeding to advance the defenses provided
30 by this article.

31 2. It is a defense in any action or proceeding by a landlord or other
32 owner of real property to regain possession of that property that the
33 action or proceeding directly or indirectly penalizes a residential
34 occupant for the exercise of rights under this article. Any residential
35 occupant whose right to continued occupancy may be impacted by the
36 outcome shall be given notice of the action or proceeding by the party
37 initiating the action or proceeding and shall have the right to appear
38 as a necessary party in accordance with the provisions of the civil
39 practice law and rules and the real property actions and proceedings law
40 in order to advance the defenses provided by this article.

41 § 96. Removal of the perpetrator of violence while assuring continued
42 occupancy by victim. Actions including termination, eviction or refusal
43 to renew a leasehold interest or termination of any other form of lawful
44 occupancy through a judicial proceeding may be carried out against the
45 perpetrator of such violence or harm. Notwithstanding the terms of an
46 existing lease, written or oral, or other form of occupancy agreement,
47 any person with rights described in section ninety-one of this article
48 shall have the right to continue in occupancy, and the court may so
49 order, for a term equivalent to the balance of the original term and
50 under the same terms and conditions as provided in the original lease or
51 occupancy agreement.

52 § 97. Remedies. Any person or entity aggrieved by a violation of the
53 protections created by this article shall have the right to bring an
54 action or special proceeding in a court of appropriate jurisdiction to
55 seek damages and/or declaratory and injunctive relief with respect to

1 such violation. A prevailing plaintiff may be entitled to an award of
2 costs and attorney's fees.

3 § 98. Guidance authorized. The New York state office for the
4 prevention of domestic violence and the division of criminal justice
5 services, upon consultation with the other, are jointly authorized to
6 provide guidance with respect to drafting of local nuisance ordinances
7 and evaluation of their impact on access to police and emergency
8 services.

9 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall apply to all
10 pending actions and proceedings.