

STATE OF NEW YORK

5550

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 10, 2021

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

AN ACT to amend the elder law, in relation to establishing the bureau of the senior tenants' advocate in the state office for the aging

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

1 Section 1. The elder law is amended by adding a new section 225 to
2 read as follows:

3 § 225. Senior tenants' advocate. 1. Bureau established. There is here-
4 by established within the office for the aging a bureau of the senior
5 tenants' advocate for the purpose of assisting senior tenants in resolv-
6 ing complaints they may have with the New York state division of housing
7 and community renewal, landlord disputes, rent increases, and other
8 housing related matters.

9 2. Appointment of senior tenants' advocate. The governor shall appoint
10 a state senior tenants' advocate to administer and supervise the bureau
11 of the senior tenants' advocate. The senior tenants' advocate shall:

12 (a) be an employee of the office for the aging;

13 (b) be selected from among individuals with expertise and experience
14 in landlord and tenant law and with other qualifications appropriate for
15 the position;

16 (c) have the authority to appoint one or more authorized represen-
17 tatives to assist the senior tenants' advocate in the performance of his
18 or her duties under this section and, if necessary, perform the duties
19 of the senior tenants' advocate on his or her behalf; and

20 (d) report directly to the director of the office for the aging.

21 3. Duties of the senior tenants' advocate. The senior tenants' advo-
22 cate shall:

23 (a) identify and assist in the resolution of complaints that are made
24 by, or on behalf of, senior tenants in this state and that relate to
25 actions, inactions, or decisions that may adversely affect the housing

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

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1 and residency rights of such senior tenants, in accordance with proce-
2 dures established by the senior tenants' advocate by making referrals to
3 the appropriate agency or agencies that may best address the complaints
4 of the senior citizen tenants;

5 (b) provide information regarding programs and agencies that can
6 assist senior tenants in resolving their complaints;

7 (c) analyze and monitor the development and implementation of federal,
8 state, and local laws, regulations, or policies with respect to the
9 adequacy of housing matters for senior tenants within the state; and

10 (d) carry out such other activities as the senior tenants' advocate
11 determines to be appropriate pursuant to pertinent state laws and regu-
12 lations.

13 4. Review of complaint. Upon receipt of a complaint, the senior
14 tenants' advocate shall determine immediately which agency would be most
15 appropriate for the purposes of forwarding such complaint. The senior
16 tenants' advocate shall then forward the complaint and inform the tenant
17 making the complaint where his or her complaint was forwarded.

18 5. Records. The senior tenants' advocate shall maintain such records
19 as are determined necessary by the office for the aging. Any state agen-
20 cy receiving a complaint pursuant to this subdivision shall provide the
21 senior tenants' advocate with written notice of the receipt of such
22 complaint.

23 6. Retaliatory discrimination prohibited. No person shall discriminate
24 against any tenant because such tenant, or any person acting on behalf
25 of such tenant, has brought or caused to be brought any complaint to the
26 senior tenants' advocate for referral, or against any other person who
27 has given or provided or is to give or provide any statements, testimo-
28 ny, other evidence, or cooperation in connection with any such
29 complaint.

30 7. Regulations. The director of the office for the aging is authorized
31 to promulgate regulations to implement the provisions of this section.

32 8. Annual report. The state senior tenants' advocate shall submit an
33 annual report to the governor, the temporary president of the senate,
34 the speaker of the assembly, and the director, and make such report
35 available to the public. Such report shall:

36 (a) describe the activities carried out by the bureau of the senior
37 tenants' advocate during the prior calendar year;

38 (b) contain and analyze data relating to complaints concerning resi-
39 dential housing for senior citizen tenants, for the purpose of identify-
40 ing and resolving recurring problems;

41 (c) evaluate the problems experienced by, and the complaints made by
42 or on behalf of, senior citizen tenants;

43 (d) contain recommendations for:

44 (i) appropriate state legislation, rules and regulations and other
45 action to preserve and promote the rights of senior citizen tenants; and

46 (ii) improving public awareness of senior citizen tenants' rights, and
47 availability of public assistance programs to senior citizen tenants;
48 and

49 (e) any other matters that the senior tenants' advocate determines to
50 be appropriate.

51 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after
52 it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amend-
53 ment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implemen-
54 tation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and
55 completed on or before such effective date.