

Community Safety through Stable Homes Act Support SB 3680 (Sen. Villa) and HB 5314 (Rep. Ford)

Safe communities don't discriminate, and housing is a basic human right. Addressing crime concerns by depriving people of their homes is both ineffective and unjustified.

Many local governments have enacted so-called "crime-free housing and nuisance property" ordinances (CFNOs) with the misguided belief that they are effective at fighting crime and keeping communities safer.

Rather, CFNOs result in **unfair penalties** and **evictions of tenants** based on alleged criminal or nuisance activity, leading to **instability and homelessness**, which compromises public safety.

CFNOs frequently exclude people of color from housing and endanger our community's most vulnerable members.

This includes survivors of domestic violence and people with disabilities, whose calls for emergency services or the police can lead to eviction rather than the assistance needed. **These ordinances often violate fair housing and other civil rights laws.**

The Community Safety through Stable Homes Act, once implemented, will prevent discrimination, help people contact police without fear, and focus on better responses to crime while also keeping families in their homes.

The bill protects civil rights and prevents homelessness by prohibiting local governments and public housing authorities from:

- Forcing or encouraging landlords to evict tenants based on alleged criminal or nuisance behavior.
- Classifying any law enforcement or emergency contact as nuisance behavior, including service calls from people seeking police assistance.
- Requiring or encouraging landlords to use criminal background checks, which can cause discrimination based on arrest and conviction records.
- Requiring or encouraging landlords to evict entire households when one family member has an interaction with law enforcement or is convicted of a crime, which can result in families being torn apart and children being homeless.

Key Problems with CFNOs in Illinois:

- CFNOs often pass during periods of perceived or actual demographic shifts, using **racially-motivated** and **coded language** about newcomers in the community.
- Enforcement is frequently concentrated in Black and Latinx communities, **reinforcing long standing patterns of residential segregation.**
- **CFNOs harm vulnerable community members** seeking law enforcement assistance, such as those experiencing domestic violence or mental illness.



For more information:

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The legislation does not change the law with respect to a landlord's ability to initiate nuisance-related evictions or to conduct background checks. The legislation also does not amend other parts of state law that provide tools to address criminal activity.

ENDORSERS

- Access Living
- AIDS Foundation Chicago
- Alliance for Safety and Justice
- Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County
- Association for Individual Development (AID)
- Arab American Family Services
- BEDS Plus Inc.
- Campaign Zero
- Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance
- Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
- Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
- Center for Housing and Health
- Citizen Action/Illinois
- Community Equity Lab at NYU Law School
- Connections for the Homeless
- Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice
- Hesed House
- Home of the Sparrow
- HOPE Fair Housing Center
- Housing Action Illinois
- Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Illinois Justice Project
- Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living
- Law Center for Better Housing
- Legal Action Chicago
- NAMI Illinois
- National Coalition for the Homeless
- National Housing Law Project
- North/Northwest Suburban Housing Task Force
- Open Communities
- Progress Center for Independent Living
- Shriver Center on Poverty Law
- South Suburban PADS
- TASC, Inc. (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities)
- The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence
- Thresholds
- Uptown People's Law Center

Endorse at <https://bit.ly/CSTSHA>

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Survivors of domestic and sexual violence often need to contact emergency services for their safety. Ordinances that penalize tenants when emergency services come out to their property or when “crime” is committed at their property disproportionately affect survivors of violence and push survivors out of our communities.

Crime-free housing and nuisance property ordinances (CFNOs) make survivors afraid to call the police.

Survivors of violence face numerous barriers when fleeing and recovering from violence. CFNOs inhibit survivors from seeking help from law enforcement and allow perpetrators of harm to create housing instability for survivors by violating CFNOs while the survivor suffers the consequences. This chills 911 calls, skews crime reports, and undermines relationships with law enforcement.

CFNOs force survivors to choose between their housing and their safety.

CFNO violations lead to eviction and require survivors to make life-threatening choices between calling for emergency assistance or putting their housing at risk. Once learning that they can be evicted for violating the ordinance, survivors often sacrifice access to emergency services and law enforcement protection.

The Community Safety through Stable Homes Act, once implemented, will protect survivors from discrimination, help people contact police without fear, and keep survivors in their homes.

Exemptions for survivors from CFNOs fail to protect survivors from harm.

- Law enforcement cannot always recognize domestic or sexual violence incidents on the scene, and it may not be safe for the survivor to disclose the violence they are experiencing.
- Common acts of domestic violence (including noise, criminal damage to property, criminal trespass, or other criminal behavior of the perpetrator) are often not covered by exemptions.
- Often, a perpetrator of violence is within a household, and the entire household will be held responsible for the perpetrator’s violation, even though they were victims of the perpetrator’s conduct.

The Community Safety through Stable Homes Act aligns with protections for survivors under Illinois law and the Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”).

- CFNOs are often inconsistent with Illinois protections for survivors, which explicitly prohibit municipalities from penalizing tenants who contact the police or other emergency services, including charging fees, revoking a rental license, or terminating a residential lease agreement.
- CFNOs also conflict with VAWA protections for survivors because events that trigger CFNOs are often related to gender-based violence and therefore covered under VAWA.

For more information on how CFNOs affect survivors:

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