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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 121 Session of  
2023

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INTRODUCED BY CIRESI, HOHENSTEIN, SCOTT, SCHLOSSBERG, KINSEY,  
HARKINS, HILL-EVANS, SANCHEZ, MADDEN, GUENST, NEILSON,  
BURGOS, D. WILLIAMS, KRAJEWSKI, SHUSTERMAN, FREEMAN, OTTEN,  
CERRATO AND O'MARA, MARCH 7, 2023

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,  
MARCH 7, 2023

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AN ACT

1 Providing for off-campus student housing rights.

2 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

3 hereby enacts as follows:

4 Section 1. Short title.

5 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Off-Campus  
6 Student Housing Tenant Rights Act.

7 Section 2. Definitions.

8 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
9 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
10 context clearly indicates otherwise:

11 "Bill of rights." The student bill of rights provided for  
12 under section 3.

13 "Department." The Department of Education of the  
14 Commonwealth.

15 "Institution of higher education." A public or private two-  
16 year or four-year or postsecondary institution of higher

1 education in this Commonwealth that has been accredited at the  
2 college level by an accrediting agency recognized by the United  
3 States Secretary of Education.

4 Section 3. Student bill of rights.

5 (a) General rule.--The department shall create and  
6 distribute a bill of rights to institutions of higher education  
7 in this Commonwealth. The bill of rights shall include  
8 information about renting, including harassment and  
9 discrimination, and include the following rights:

10 (1) To live in a habitable dwelling.

11 (2) To residential privacy.

12 (3) To a hearing prior to eviction.

13 (4) To receive a writ of possession prior to eviction.

14 (5) For an individual with disabilities to request  
15 reasonable accommodations.

16 (6) To visitors.

17 (7) To utility access.

18 (b) Notice.--An institution of higher education shall  
19 distribute a bill of rights to each student who is enrolled at  
20 the institution of higher education, and each newly enrolled  
21 student thereafter. The institution of higher education shall  
22 provide to each student enrolled, along with the bill of rights,  
23 a list of the most recent contact information for the municipal  
24 code enforcement office where the institution of higher  
25 education is located and for all municipal code enforcement  
26 offices in adjacent municipalities.

27 Section 4. Off-campus student certification course.

28 (a) Course creation.--The department shall create an online  
29 course to educate new students of their rights as tenants.

30 (b) Course requirements.--The following criteria shall apply

1 to the online course under subsection (a):

2 (1) The online course shall be one instructional session  
3 which can be viewed via a secure Internet website.

4 (2) The online course shall provide:

5 (i) Tenant rights provided under Federal, State or  
6 local law, ordinance or court precedent.

7 (ii) The actions students may take when experiencing  
8 unsafe housing.

9 (iii) Other relevant information the department  
10 deems appropriate for inclusion in the online course.

11 (3) All students of the institution of higher education  
12 enrolled after the effective date of this section shall be  
13 required to view the online course. Documentation of the  
14 successful completion of the online course by each student  
15 shall be maintained by the institution of higher education.  
16 An institution of higher education may charge a fee of not  
17 more than \$50 to a student who fails to view the online  
18 course under this section by the end of the student's first  
19 semester.

20 (4) An institution of higher education may create and  
21 administer the institution's own off-campus student  
22 certification online course. Written notification and all  
23 electronic files, documents and a completed copy of the  
24 online course must be provided to the department.

25 Section 5. Effective date.

26 This act shall take effect January 1, 2024, or immediately,  
27 whichever is later.