

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6732

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As of February 4, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to early termination of rental agreements.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing the early termination of rental agreements.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kline, Winsley, Costa, Long, Fairley and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Judiciary: 2/5/02.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Staff:** Lisa Ellis (786-7421)

**Background:** A rental agreement between a landlord and tenant sets down the terms which will be followed while the tenant lives in a rental unit. Rental agreements may require a tenant to stay for a specific amount of time and pay a deposit.

Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who enter into rental arrangements may need to move out and terminate a rental agreement before the lease period ends to avoid further acts of violence by a perpetrator. In seeking future rental housing, victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking may experience housing discrimination if information related to his or her status as a victim is disclosed to a landlord.

**Summary of Bill:** A victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking may terminate the rental agreement, avoid further rent, obtain a pro-rata refund of prepaid rent, and get a statement of the basis for retaining any rent if he or she provides the landlord with a protection order, police report or verification of consultation with or report to a qualified third party. In order for the termination of the rental agreement to be effective, the tenant must provide written documentation to the landlord within 90 days of the act giving rise to the protection order, police report or consultation or report to a qualified third party.

Damages, court costs and reasonable attorney fees may be imposed on a landlord who terminates a tenancy, fails to renew a tenancy, or refuses to enter into a rental agreement on the basis that the tenant or applicant is a domestic violence victim, sexual assault victim, stalking victim or previously terminated a rental agreement for domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking reasons.

Tenant screening service providers may face civil liability for including any information in reports to landlords about domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking; a prospective tenant's status as a domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking victim; or stating that the prospective tenant has previously terminated a rental agreement for domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking reasons.

If a tenant obtains a court order for possession of a dwelling unit to the exclusion of one or more cotenants, he or she may request and pay for the replacement of a lock or configuration for a new key at his or her own expense.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.