

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5697

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As of February 14, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to authorizing the utilities and transportation commission to regulate the rates and services of all persons engaging in the business of acting as a landlord for a mobile home park, manufactured housing community, or manufactured/mobile home community.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing the utilities and transportation commission to regulate the rates and services of all persons engaging in the business of acting as a landlord for a mobile home park, manufactured housing community, or manufactured/mobile home community.

**Sponsors:** Senators Van De Wege, Kuderer, Conway, Hunt, Lovelett and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Housing: 2/10/23.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Utilities and Transportation Commission to regulate the rates and services of all persons engaging within the state in the business of acting as a landlord for mobile home parks, manufactured housing communities, or manufactured/mobile home communities.
- Prohibits, with limited exceptions, a landlord from increasing the rent for a tenancy subject to the Manufactured/Mobile Home Landlord-Tenant Act in an amount greater than the rate of inflation as measured by the consumer price index.
- Makes a landlord who charges and collects rent in excess of permitted amounts, liable to the tenant for an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

**Staff:** Riley Bengé (786-7316)

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Background:** Utilities and Transportation Commission. The Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) regulates the rates, services, and practices of a variety of businesses in the state. The UTC is required to ensure that rates charged by these companies are fair, just, and reasonable.

Manufactured/Mobile Home Landlord Tenant Act. The Manufactured/Mobile Home Landlord Tenant Act (MHLTA) regulates the relationship between the owner of a manufactured/mobile home community (landlord) and the owner of the manufactured or mobile home (tenant). The MHLTA specifies what must be in the rental agreement before a tenant moves in, the responsibilities of the landlord and the tenant, and provides a dispute resolution program through the Attorney General's Office.

Rental Agreements—Notice of a Rent Increase. A rental agreement between a landlord and a tenant may not contain any provision which allows the landlord to alter the due date for rent payments or increase the rent during the term of the rental agreement if the term is less than two years, or more frequently than annually if the initial term is for two years or more. A rental agreement for a term exceeding two years may provide for annual increases in rent in specified amounts, or by a formula specified in such agreement.

A landlord seeking to increase the rent upon the expiration of the term of a rental agreement must notify the tenant in writing three months prior to the effective date of the rent increase.

**Summary of Bill:** Utilities and Transportation Commission—Regulation. The UTC is authorized to regulate the rates and services of all persons engaging within this state in the business of acting as a landlord for mobile home parks, manufactured housing communities, or manufactured/mobile home communities.

*Annual Report.* Landlords must file an annual report to the UTC that includes the following:

- a summary of the total number of manufactured homes and mobile homes in each park that the landlord owns;
- the length and type of terms for each manufactured and mobile home in a park, if prices are not uniform for a given park that the landlord owns;
- the annual turnover of renters for each manufactured park that the landlord owns;
- all expenditures and collections of the landlord for rental services, including money collected to pay for utilities and associated administrative fees;
- a listing of any and all increases to rental rates in the reporting year;
- if the landlord assesses and collects from their tenants a service charge for gas or electric service, the landlord must include a detailed statement of each service charge that the landlord assesses and collects from the tenants and the expenditures that the landlord makes from the separate account for each service charge during the period of the report; and
- if the landlord assesses and collects from the tenants a late charge for any delinquency in paying for rent, or utility services, a description of the method of calculation of such late charges must be included in the annual report.

Rent Increase Limit. Unless an exception applies, a landlord may not increase the rent for a tenancy during the first 12 months after the tenancy begins, and at any time after the first year of the tenancy, in an amount greater than the rate of inflation as measured by the consumer price index (CPI) above the existing rent. The CPI means the September 12-month percent change in the CPI for all urban consumers, west region, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor in September of the current calendar year.

A landlord that terminates a tenancy may not set the rental rate for the next tenancy greater than the CPI above the previous rental rate.

If a mobile home park or manufactured housing community is sold or leased, the new owner or leaseholder may not increase rent beyond the amount that would have been permitted for the previous landlord.

Exceptions to the Rent Increase Limit. Except for certain escalation clauses for pro rata shares of any increase or decrease in the mobile home park's real property taxes or utility assessments or charges, the only exception to the rent increase limit is if a landlord participates in the Banked Capacity Program.

*Banked Capacity Program.* If a landlord participates in the Banked Capacity Program administered by the UTC, the landlord may increase the rent above the maximum rent increase percentage by an additional amount equal to the CPI for each year that the landlord has banked capacity.

Under the Banked Capacity Program, if a landlord does not increase the rent in a 12-month period, the landlord may choose to bank the rent increase capacity for future years. Within certain limitations, for each preceding year since the last increase in rent, the landlord may increase rent by the total CPI increase since the year in which rent was last raised. A landlord who participates in the Banked Capacity Program must provide an annual notice to current and prospective tenants of the total banked capacity and possible future rent increases. A landlord forfeits their right to claim banked capacity if the landlord fails to properly deliver notice to the tenant.

The UTC must adopt rules to implement the Banked Capacity Program and establish a process to document when a landlord decides to bank capacity. The UTC must also make information about the Banked Capacity Program available on its website, including a method for a tenant to verify their landlord's participation in the program and the amount of total banked capacity for their dwelling unit or mobile home lot.

*Limitations on Banked Capacity.* The landlord's ability to use banked capacity is limited in certain circumstances.

If a tenant is evicted, or if a tenant leaves after an eviction has been initiated, for any new rental agreement entered into within 12 months of the termination of the prior tenancy, the amount of rent that a landlord may charge a new tenant is limited to the previous tenant's rent plus any banked capacity that was accrued under the prior tenancy.

If a tenant voluntarily moves out, the amount of rent that a landlord may charge a new tenant is not limited by the rent increase limit or any banked capacity. However, if the landlord increases the rent for the new tenant beyond the previous tenant's rent, any banked capacity is lost. If the landlord chooses not to increase the rent for the new tenant, the landlord may retain any banked capacity that accrued under the prior tenancy.

If a new owner buys a property and takes over a lease, the new owner may not increase rent for existing tenants beyond the amount that the previous landlord would have been allowed to increase rent. The former landlord's banked capacity may be transferred as a part of a property sale.

Rental Agreements. Rental agreements for terms exceeding two years may not provide for annual increases in rent in specified amounts or by a specified formula.

Remedies. A landlord who charges and receives rent in excess of the permitted rent increase limits is liable to the tenant for an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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