

1 VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

2 *An Act to amend and reenact § 55.1-1203 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Virginia Residential Landlord*
 3 *and Tenant Act; adverse action by landlord; tenant remedies.*

4 [S 815]

5 Approved

6 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**7 **1. That § 55.1-1203 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**8 **§ 55.1-1203. Application; deposit, fee, and additional information.**

9 A. Any landlord may require a refundable application deposit in addition to a nonrefundable application
 10 fee. If the applicant fails to rent the unit for which application was made, from the application deposit the
 11 landlord shall refund to the applicant within 20 days after the applicant's failure to rent the unit or the
 12 landlord's rejection of the application all sums in excess of the landlord's actual expenses and damages
 13 together with an itemized list of such expenses and damages. If, however, the application deposit was made
 14 by cash, certified check, cashier's check, or postal money order, such refund shall be made within 10 days of
 15 the applicant's failure to rent the unit if the failure to rent is due to the landlord's rejection of the application.
 16 If the landlord fails to comply with this section, the applicant may recover as damages suffered by him that
 17 portion of the application deposit wrongfully withheld and reasonable attorney fees.

18 B. A landlord may request that a prospective tenant provide information that will enable the landlord to
 19 determine whether each applicant may become a tenant. The landlord may photocopy each applicant's driver's
 20 license or other similar photo identification, containing either the applicant's social security number or control
 21 number issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles pursuant to § 46.2-342. However, a landlord shall not
 22 photocopy a U.S. government-issued identification so long as to do so is a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 701. The
 23 landlord may require, for the purpose of determining whether each applicant is eligible to become a tenant in
 24 the landlord's dwelling unit, that each applicant provide a social security number issued by the U.S. Social
 25 Security Administration or an individual taxpayer identification number issued by the U.S. Internal Revenue
 26 Service.

27 C. An application fee shall not exceed \$50, exclusive of any actual out-of-pocket expenses paid by the
 28 landlord to a third party performing background, credit, or other pre-occupancy checks on the applicant.
 29 However, where an application is being made for a dwelling unit that is a public housing unit or other
 30 housing unit subject to regulation by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, an
 31 application fee shall not exceed \$32, exclusive of any actual out-of-pocket expenses paid to a third party by
 32 the landlord performing background, credit, or other pre-occupancy checks on the applicant.

33 D. A landlord shall consider evidence of an applicant's status as a victim of family abuse, as defined in §
 34 16.1-228, to mitigate any adverse effect of an otherwise qualified applicant's low credit score. In order to
 35 establish the applicant's status as a victim of family abuse, an applicant may submit to the landlord (i) a letter
 36 from a sexual and domestic violence program, a housing counselor certified by the U.S. Department of
 37 Housing and Urban Development, or an attorney representing the applicant; (ii) a law-enforcement incident
 38 report; or (iii) a court order. If a landlord does not comply with this section, the applicant may recover actual
 39 damages, including all amounts paid to the landlord as an application fee, application deposit, or
 40 reimbursement for any of the landlord's out-of-pocket expenses that were charged to the prospective tenant,
 41 along with attorney fees.

42 E. A landlord who owns more than four rental dwelling units or more than a 10 percent interest in more
 43 than four rental dwelling units, whether individually or through a business entity, in the Commonwealth shall
 44 not take adverse action against a prospective tenant by denying the rental application, increasing the security
 45 deposit or rent, or imposing more restrictive lease terms due to the prospective applicant's history of any
 46 dismissed or nonsuited unlawful detainer cases or unlawful detainer cases eligible for expungement pursuant
 47 to § 8.01-130.01. In a full hearing on a petition filed pursuant to this section and upon evidence presented
 48 establishing such adverse action, the prospective tenant may recover (i) actual damages, including all
 49 amounts paid to the landlord as an application fee, application deposit, and reimbursement for any of the
 50 landlord's out-of-pocket expenses that were charged to the prospective tenant; (ii) statutory damages of \$1,
 51 000; and (iii) reasonable attorney fees.

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