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§ 55.1-1201. Applicability of chapter; local authority.

A. This chapter shall apply to all jurisdictions in the Commonwealth and may not be waived or otherwise modified, in whole or in part, by the governing body of any locality or its boards or commissions or other instrumentalities or by the courts of the Commonwealth. Occupancy in a public housing unit or other housing unit that is a dwelling unit is subject to this chapter; however, if the provisions of this chapter are inconsistent with the regulations of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, such regulations shall control.

B. The provisions of this chapter shall apply to occupancy in all single-family and multifamily dwelling units and multifamily dwelling units located in the Commonwealth.

C. The following tenancies and occupancies are not residential tenancies under this chapter:

1. Residence at a public or private institution, if incidental to detention or the provision of medical, geriatric, educational, counseling, religious, or similar services;

2. Occupancy by a member of a fraternal or social organization in the portion of a structure operated for the benefit of the organization;

3. Occupancy by an owner of a condominium unit or a holder of a proprietary lease in a cooperative;

4. Occupancy in a campground as defined in § 35.1-1;

5. Occupancy by a tenant who pays no rent pursuant to a rental agreement;

6. Occupancy by an employee of a landlord whose right to occupancy in a multifamily dwelling unit is conditioned upon employment in and about the premises or a former employee whose occupancy continues less than 60 days; or

7. Occupancy under a contract of sale of a dwelling unit or the property of which it is a part, if the occupant is the purchaser or a person who succeeds to his interest.

D. The following provisions apply to occupancy in a hotel, motel, extended stay facility, etc.:

1. A guest who is an occupant of a hotel, motel, extended stay facility, vacation residential facility, including those governed by the Virginia Real Estate Time-Share Act (§ 55.1-2200 et seq.), boardinghouse, or similar transient lodging shall not be construed to be a tenant living in a dwelling unit if such person does not reside in such lodging as his primary residence. Such guest shall be exempt from this chapter, and the innkeeper or property owner, or his agent, shall have the right to use self-help eviction under Virginia law, without the necessity of the filing of an unlawful detainer action in a court of competent jurisdiction and the execution of a writ of eviction issued pursuant to such action, which would otherwise be required under this chapter.

2. A hotel, motel, extended stay facility, vacation residential facility, including those governed by the Virginia Real Estate Time-Share Act (§ 55.1-2200 et seq.), boardinghouse, or similar transient lodging shall be exempt from the provisions of this chapter if overnight sleeping accommodations are furnished to a person for consideration if such person does not reside in such lodging as his primary residence.

3. If a person resides in a hotel, motel, extended stay facility, vacation residential facility, including those governed by the Virginia Real Estate Time-Share Act (§ 55.1-2200 et seq.), boardinghouse, or similar transient lodging as his primary residence for 90 consecutive days or less, such lodging shall not be subject to the provisions of this chapter. However, the owner of such lodging establishment shall give a five-day written notice of nonpayment to a person residing in such lodging and, upon the expiration of the five-day period specified in the notice, may exercise self-help eviction if payment in full has not been received.

4. If a person resides in a hotel, motel, extended stay facility, vacation residential facility, including those governed by the Virginia Real Estate Time-Share Act (§ 55.1-2200 et seq.), boardinghouse, or similar transient lodging as his primary residence for more than 90 consecutive days or is subject to a written lease for more than 90 days, such lodging shall be subject to the provisions of this chapter.

5. Nothing herein shall be construed to preclude the owner of a lodging establishment that uses self-help eviction pursuant to this section from pursuing any civil or criminal remedies under the laws of the Commonwealth.

E. Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a locality from establishing a commission, reconciliatory in nature only, or designating an existing agency, which upon mutual agreement of the parties may mediate conflicts that may arise out of the application of this chapter, nor shall anything in this chapter be deemed to prohibit an ordinance designed to effect compliance with local property maintenance codes. This chapter shall supersede all other local ordinances or regulations concerning landlord and tenant relations and the leasing of residential property.

1974, c. 680, § 55-248.3; 1977, c. 427; 2000, c. 760, § 55-248.3:1; 2001, c. 416; 2017, c. 730; 2018, cc. 50, 78, 221; 2019, cc. 180, 700, 712.

The chapters of the acts of assembly referenced in the historical citation at the end of this section may not constitute a comprehensive list of such chapters and may exclude chapters whose provisions have expired.

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§ 55.1-1208. Prohibited provisions in rental agreements.

A. A rental agreement shall not contain provisions that the tenant:

1. Agrees to waive or forgo rights or remedies under this chapter;

2. Agrees to waive or forgo rights or remedies pertaining to the 120-day conversion or rehabilitation notice required in the Virginia Condominium Act (§ 55.1-1900 et seq.) or the Virginia Real Estate Cooperative Act (§ 55.1-2100 et seq.) or under § 55.1-1410;

3. Authorizes any person to confess judgment on a claim arising out of the rental agreement;

4. Agrees to pay the landlord's attorney fees except as provided in this chapter;

5. Agrees to the exculpation or limitation of any liability of the landlord to the tenant arising under law or to indemnify the landlord for that liability or any associated costs;

6. Agrees as a condition of tenancy in public housing to a prohibition or restriction of any lawful possession of a firearm within individual dwelling units unless required by federal law or regulation;

7. Agrees to the payment of a security deposit, insurance premiums for damage insurance, and insurance premiums for renter's insurance prior to the commencement of the tenancy that exceed the amount of two months' periodic rent; or

8. Agrees to waive remedies or rights under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. § 3901 et seq., prior to the occurrence of a dispute between landlord and tenant. Execution of leases shall not be contingent upon the execution of a waiver of rights under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act; however, upon the occurrence of any dispute, the landlord and tenant may execute a waiver of such rights and remedies as to that dispute in order to facilitate a resolution.

B. Any provision prohibited by subsection A that is included in a rental agreement is unenforceable. If a landlord brings an action to enforce any such provision, the tenant may recover actual damages sustained by him and reasonable attorney fees.

1974, c. 680, § 55-248.9; 1977, c. 427; 1987, c. 473; 1991, c. 720; 2000, c. 760; 2002, c. 531; 2003, c. 905; 2016, c. 744; 2019, c. 712; 2020, c. 998; 2021, Sp. Sess. I, cc. 427, 477, 478.

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§ 55.1-1210. Landlord and tenant remedies for abuse of access.

If the tenant refuses to allow lawful access, the landlord may obtain injunctive relief to compel access, or terminate the rental agreement. In either case, the landlord may recover actual damages and reasonable attorney fees. If the landlord makes an unlawful entry or a lawful entry in an unreasonable manner or makes repeated demands for entry that is otherwise lawful but that have the effect of unreasonably harassing the tenant, the tenant may obtain injunctive relief to prevent the recurrence of the conduct, or terminate the rental agreement. In either case, the tenant may recover actual damages and reasonable attorney fees.

2000, c. 760, § 55-248.10:1; 2019, c. 712.

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§ 55.1-1228. Rules and regulations.

A. A landlord, from time to time, may adopt rules or regulations, however described, concerning the tenant's use and occupancy of the dwelling unit and premises. Any such rule or regulation is enforceable against the tenant only if:

1. Its purpose is to promote the convenience, safety, or welfare of the tenants in the premises, preserve the landlord's property from abusive use, or make a fair distribution of services and facilities held out for the tenants generally;

2. It is reasonably related to the purpose for which it is adopted;

3. It applies to all tenants in the premises in a fair manner;

4. It is sufficiently explicit in its prohibition, direction, or limitation of the tenant's conduct to fairly inform him of what he is required to do or is prohibited from doing to comply;

5. It is not for the purpose of evading the obligations of the landlord; and

6. The tenant has been provided with a copy of the rules and regulations or changes to such rules and regulations at the time he enters into the rental agreement or when they are adopted.

B. A rule or regulation adopted, changed, or provided to the tenant after the tenant enters into the rental agreement shall be enforceable against the tenant if reasonable notice of its adoption or change has been given to the tenant and it does not constitute a substantial modification of his bargain. If a rule or regulation adopted or changed after the tenant enters into the rental agreement does constitute a substantial modification of his bargain, it shall not be valid unless the tenant consents to it in writing.

C. Any court enforcing this chapter shall consider violations of the reasonable rules and regulations imposed under this section as a breach of the rental agreement and grant the landlord appropriate relief.

1974, c. 680, § 55-248.17; 2000, c. 760; 2017, c. 730; 2019, c. 712.

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§ 55.1-1229. Access; consent; correction of nonemergency conditions; relocation of tenant; security systems.

A. 1. The tenant shall not unreasonably withhold consent to the landlord to enter into the dwelling unit in order to inspect the premises; make necessary or agreed-upon repairs, decorations, alterations, or improvements; supply necessary or agreed-upon services; or exhibit the dwelling unit to prospective or actual purchasers, mortgagees, tenants, workmen, or contractors.

2. If, upon inspection of a dwelling unit during the term of a tenancy, the landlord determines there is a violation by the tenant of § 55.1-1227 or the rental agreement materially affecting health and safety that can be remedied by repair, replacement of a damaged item, or cleaning in accordance with § 55.1-1248, the landlord may make such repairs and send the tenant an invoice for payment. If, upon inspection of the dwelling unit during the term of a tenancy, the landlord discovers a violation of the rental agreement, this chapter, or other applicable law, the landlord may send a written notice of termination pursuant to § 55.1-1245.

3. If the rental agreement so provides and if a tenant without reasonable justification declines to permit the landlord or managing agent to exhibit the dwelling unit for sale or lease, the landlord may recover damages, costs, and reasonable attorney fees against such tenant.

As used in this subdivision, "reasonable justification" includes the tenant's reasonable concern for his own health, or the health of any authorized occupant, during a state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to § 44-146.17 in response to a communicable disease of public health threat as defined in § 44-146.16, provided that the tenant has provided written notice to the landlord informing the landlord of such concern. In such circumstances, the tenant shall provide to the landlord or managing agent a video tour of the dwelling unit or other acceptable substitute for exhibiting the dwelling unit for sale or lease.

4. The landlord may enter the dwelling unit without consent of the tenant in case of emergency. The landlord shall not abuse the right of access or use it to harass the tenant. Except in case of emergency or if it is impractical to do so, the landlord shall give the tenant notice of his intent to enter and may enter only at reasonable times. Unless impractical to do so, the landlord shall give the tenant at least 72 hours' notice of routine maintenance to be performed that has not been requested by the tenant. If the tenant makes a request for maintenance, the landlord is not required to provide notice to the tenant. Notwithstanding the foregoing, during a state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to § 44-146.17 in response to a communicable disease of public health threat as defined in § 44-146.16, the tenant may provide written notice to the landlord requesting that one or more nonemergency property conditions in the dwelling unit not be addressed in the normal course of business of the landlord due to such communicable disease of public health threat. In such case, the tenant shall be deemed to have waived any and all claims and rights under this chapter against the landlord for failure to address such nonemergency property conditions. At any time thereafter, the tenant may consent in writing to the landlord addressing such nonemergency property conditions in the normal course of business of the landlord. In the case of a tenant who has provided notice that he does not want nonemergency repairs made during the state of emergency due to a communicable disease of public health threat, the landlord may nonetheless enter the dwelling unit to do nonemergency repairs and maintenance with at least seven days' written notice to the tenant and at a time consented to by the tenant, no more than once every six months, provided that the employees and agents sent by the landlord are wearing all appropriate and reasonable personal protective equipment as required by state law. Furthermore, if the landlord is required to conduct maintenance or an inspection pursuant to the agreement for the loan or insurance policy that covers the dwelling unit, the tenant shall allow such maintenance or inspection, provided that the employees and agents sent by the landlord are wearing all appropriate personal protective equipment as required by state law.

5. During the pendency of an unlawful detainer filed by the landlord against the tenant, the landlord may request the court to enter an order requiring the tenant to provide the landlord with access to such dwelling unit.

B. Upon the sole determination by the landlord of the existence of a nonemergency property condition in the dwelling unit that requires the tenant to temporarily vacate the dwelling unit in order for the landlord to properly remedy such property condition, the landlord may, upon at least 30 days' written notice to the tenant, require the tenant to temporarily vacate the dwelling unit for a period not to exceed 30 days to a comparable dwelling unit, or hotel, as selected by the landlord and at no expense or cost to the tenant. The landlord shall not be required to pay for any other expenses of the tenant that arise after the temporary relocation period. The landlord and tenant may agree for the tenant to temporarily vacate the dwelling unit in less than 30 days. For purposes of this subsection, "nonemergency property condition" means (i) a condition in the dwelling unit that, in the determination of the landlord, is necessary for the landlord to remedy in order for the landlord to be in compliance with § 55.1-1220; (ii) the condition does not need to be remedied within a 24-hour period, with any condition that needs to be remedied within 24 hours being defined as an "emergency condition"; and (iii) the condition can only be effectively remedied by the temporary relocation of the tenant pursuant to the provisions of this subsection.

The tenant shall continue to be responsible for payment of rent under the rental agreement during the period of any temporary relocation. The landlord shall pay all costs of repairs or remediation required to address the nonemergency property condition. Refusal of the tenant to cooperate with a temporary relocation pursuant to this subsection shall be deemed a breach of the rental agreement, unless the tenant agrees to vacate the unit and terminate the rental agreement within the 30-day notice period. If the landlord properly remedies the nonemergency property condition within the 30-day period, nothing in this section shall be construed to entitle the tenant to terminate the rental agreement. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the landlord from taking legal action against the tenant for any noncompliance that occurs during the period of any temporary relocation pursuant to this subsection. During the pendency of an unlawful detainer filed by the landlord against the tenant, the landlord may request the court to enter an order requiring the tenant to provide the landlord with access to such dwelling unit.

C. The landlord has no other right to access except by court order or that permitted by §§ 55.1-1248 and 55.1-1249 or if the tenant has abandoned or surrendered the premises.

D. The tenant may install within the dwelling unit new security systems that the tenant may believe necessary to ensure his safety, including chain latch devices approved by the landlord and fire detection devices, provided that:

1. Installation does no permanent damage to any part of the dwelling unit;

2. A duplicate of all keys and instructions for the operation of all devices are given to the landlord; and

3. Upon termination of the tenancy, the tenant is responsible for payment to the landlord for reasonable costs incurred for the removal of all such devices and repairs to all damaged areas.

E. Upon written request of a tenant in a dwelling unit, the landlord shall install a carbon monoxide alarm in the tenant's dwelling unit within 90 days. The landlord may charge the tenant a reasonable fee to recover the costs of the equipment and labor for such installation. The landlord's installation of a carbon monoxide alarm shall be in compliance with the Uniform Statewide Building Code (§ 36-97 et seq.).

1974, c. 680, § 55-248.18; 1993, c. 634; 1995, c. 601; 1999, c. 65; 2000, c. 760; 2001, c. 524; 2004, c. 307; 2008, cc. 489, 617; 2009, c. 663; 2011, c. 766; 2014, c. 632; 2015, c. 596; 2016, c. 744; 2017, c. 730; 2018, cc. 41, 81; 2019, c. 712; 2021, Sp. Sess. I, c. 409.

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§ 55.1-1239. Wrongful failure to supply an essential service.

A. If contrary to the rental agreement or provisions of this chapter the landlord willfully or negligently fails to supply an essential service, the tenant shall serve a written notice on the landlord specifying the breach, if acting under this section, and, in such event and after allowing the landlord reasonable time to correct such breach, may:

1. Recover damages based upon the diminution in the fair rental value of the dwelling unit; or

2. Procure reasonable substitute housing during the period of the landlord's noncompliance, in which case the tenant is excused from paying rent for the period of the landlord's noncompliance, as determined by the court.

B. If the tenant proceeds under this section, he shall be entitled to recover reasonable attorney fees; however, he may not proceed under § 55.1-1234 as to that breach. The rights of the tenant under this section shall not arise until he has given written notice to the landlord; however, no rights arise if the condition was caused by the deliberate or negligent act or omission of the tenant, an authorized occupant, or a guest or invitee of the tenant.

1974, c. 680, § 55-248.23; 1982, c. 260; 2000, c. 760; 2019, c. 712.

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§ 55.1-1258. Retaliatory conduct prohibited.

A. Except as provided in this section or as otherwise provided by law, a landlord may not retaliate by increasing rent or decreasing services or by bringing or threatening to bring an action for possession or by causing a termination of the rental agreement pursuant to § 55.1-1253 or 55.1-1410 after he has knowledge that (i) the tenant has complained to a governmental agency charged with responsibility for enforcement of a building or housing code of a violation applicable to the premises materially affecting health or safety, (ii) the tenant has made a complaint to or filed an action against the landlord for a violation of any provision of this chapter, (iii) the tenant has organized or become a member of a tenant's organization, or (iv) the tenant has testified in a court proceeding against the landlord. However, the provisions of this subsection shall not be construed to prevent the landlord from increasing rent to that which is charged for similar market rentals nor decreasing services that apply equally to all tenants.

B. If the landlord acts in violation of this section, the tenant is entitled to the applicable remedies provided for in this chapter, including recovery of actual damages, and may assert such retaliation as a defense in any action against him for possession. The burden of proving retaliatory intent shall be on the tenant.

C. Notwithstanding subsections A and B, a landlord may terminate the rental agreement pursuant to § 55.1-1253 or 55.1-1410 and bring an action for possession if:

1. Violation of the applicable building or housing code was caused primarily by lack of reasonable care by the tenant, an authorized occupant, or a guest or invitee of the tenant;

2. The tenant is in default in rent;

3. Compliance with the applicable building or housing code requires alteration, remodeling, or demolition that would effectively deprive the tenant of use of the dwelling unit; or

4. The tenant is in default of a provision of the rental agreement materially affecting the health and safety of himself or others. The maintenance of the action provided in this section does not release the landlord from liability under § 55.1-1226.

D. The landlord may also terminate the rental agreement pursuant to § 55.1-1253 or 55.1-1410 for any other reason not prohibited by law unless the court finds that the reason for the termination was retaliation.

1974, c. 680, § 55-248.39; 1983, c. 396; 1985, c. 268; 2000, c. 760; 2015, c. 408; 2019, c. 712.

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§ 18.2-121. Entering property of another for purpose of damaging it, etc.

A. As used in this section, "disability" means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities.

B. It is unlawful for any person to enter the land, dwelling, outhouse, or any other building of another for the purpose of damaging such property or any of the contents thereof or in any manner to interfere with the rights of the owner, user, or occupant thereof to use such property free from interference.

Any person violating the provisions of this section is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. However, if a person intentionally selects the property entered because of the race, religious conviction, color, gender, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin of the owner, user, or occupant of the property, the person is guilty of a Class 6 felony, and the penalty upon conviction shall include a term of confinement of at least six months.

Code 1950, § 18.1-183; 1960, c. 358; 1975, cc. 14, 15; 1994, c. 658; 1997, c. 833; 2004, c. 461; 2020, cc. 746, 1171.

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§ 18.2-22. Conspiracy to commit felony.

(a) If any person shall conspire, confederate or combine with another, either within or outside the Commonwealth, to commit a felony within the Commonwealth, or if he shall so conspire, confederate or combine with another within the Commonwealth to commit a felony either within or outside the Commonwealth, he shall be guilty of a felony that shall be punishable as follows:

(1) Every person who so conspires to commit an offense that is punishable as a Class 1 felony is guilty of a Class 3 felony;

(2) Every person who so conspires to commit an offense that is any other felony is guilty of a Class 5 felony; and

(3) Every person who so conspires to commit an offense the maximum punishment for which is confinement in a state correctional facility for a period of less than five years shall be confined in a state correctional facility for a period of one year, or, in the discretion of the jury or the court trying the case without a jury, may be confined in jail not exceeding 12 months and fined not exceeding $500, either or both.

(b) However, in no event shall the punishment for a conspiracy to commit an offense exceed the maximum punishment for the commission of the offense itself.

(c) Jurisdiction for the trial of any person accused of a conspiracy under this section shall be in the county or city wherein any part of such conspiracy is planned or in the county or city wherein any act is done toward the consummation of such plan or conspiracy.

(d) The penalty provisions of this section shall not apply to any person who conspires to commit any offense defined in the Drug Control Act (§ 54.1-3400 et seq.) or of Article 1 (§ 18.2-247 et seq.) of Chapter 7. The penalty for any such violation shall be as provided in § 18.2-256.

Code 1950, § 18.1-15.3; 1972, c. 484; 1973, c. 399; 1975, cc. 14, 15; 1983, c. 19; 2021, Sp. Sess. I, cc. 344, 345.

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§ 8.01-46. Justification and mitigation of damages.

In any action for defamation, the defendant may justify by alleging and proving that the words spoken or written were true, and, after notice in writing of his intention to do so, given to the plaintiff at the time of, or for, pleading to such action, may give in evidence, in mitigation of damages, that he made or offered an apology to the plaintiff for such defamation before the commencement of the action, or as soon afterwards as he had an opportunity of doing so in case the action shall have been commenced before there was an opportunity of making or offering such apology.

Code 1950, § 8-631; 1977, c. 617.

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