



March 29, 2023

Assembly Committee on Commerce and labor

Assemblywoman Marzola and committee members:

My name is Laura Tooker and I am a member of Green Valley United Methodist Church which is a proud member of Nevadans for the Common Good. On behalf of Nevadans for the Common Good, a broad-based organization of 30+ dues-paying congregations and non-profits throughout Southern Nevada representing over 100,000 people, we support AB298.

Our organization is uniquely positioned to hear the challenges and burdens that tenants face in Southern Nevada. Through our member institutions we have talked to thousands of Southern Nevada residents, walked through dozens of neighborhoods, and met with many community leaders. We have heard about the high costs and increasing barriers to obtaining affordable and fair lease agreements from across a diversity of residents.

A consistent thread in the stories we have heard is the unprecedented rise in application fees for a house or apartment rental and a lack of understanding, in general, regarding other fees included in a lease agreement. The upfront expense of high application fees is an ongoing and costly burden for all families including working professionals, foster parents, seniors, and students that limits our community in finding permanent and stable housing.

We heard a story from a clergy member that has been forced to pay hundreds of dollars for each application for a rental with each application fee including costs for each family member. This means, as a family of 5, he is paying more for each application than most. Currently, these applications are not refunded when the potential tenant doesn't get the rental for which he applied. This application fee structure can quickly deplete money needed for a deposit or paying rent once a unit is obtained and limits a person's ability to apply for other housing when not accepted for a rental unit. This burdensome process of obtaining housing has led the clergy member to consider relocating to another state in order to have more opportunity to obtain a lease and house his family. AB298 addresses this concern by providing for a refund of application fees when the prospective tenant does not obtain a lease agreement. This bill also limits an application fee to the costs of any background and credit check, which will limit the discretionary nature of these fees that exist today. We hope that this will also limit the application fee to be collected only from the prospective lease signers rather than every member of the family including children like we've heard from that clergy member.

Application fees should not be seen as a revenue source for our landlords or property managers. They should merely be a mechanism to cover the direct and actual costs of background checks.

AB298 provides additional tenant protection by requiring appendices to a lease that contains clear and concise explanation of each fee that the tenant may be charged and the tenant's rights per federal and state laws as well as local ordinances.

Nevadans for the Common Good encourages you to support this bill which reduces barriers and adds key protections for tenants who make up nearly 50% of our community.

NEVADANS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

PLEASE SEND CORRESPONDENCE VIA MAIL TO:

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