



Legal Services Advocacy Project

## **HF 3951**

### **Minnesota Multihousing Association / Legal Aid Landlord-Tenant Bill**

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#### **Background/Issues**

This bill attempts to solve two problems:

1. Landlords are increasingly requiring tenants to use so-called “portals” (digital platforms) to pay rent, request repairs, and otherwise communicate with the landlord. The ability to drop off the rent with the landlord or property manager or send in a check is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. When technology works it is great, but when it doesn’t it creates significant problems. Tenants can’t pay their rent, make repair requests, or communicate with their landlords. Further, these “portals” are almost always if not always operated by third party vendors who have no contractual or other relation with the tenant. Sometimes when rent cannot be paid through no fault of the tenant, an unfair eviction is filed and though it can be unwound, then a eviction is on the record and the burden is on the tenant to get it expunged.
2. In 2024, the Legislature comprehensively overhauled the statutes governing the passing along of the utilities (whether submetered electricity or apportioned gas or water) to tenants. One of those provisions, appropriately, required landlords to bill tenants their portion of the bill based on the ACTUAL bill the landlord received from the utility. An unanticipated glitch was discovered last year. Sometimes, tenants move out on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> or earlier than when the landlord receives the utility bill, creating a situation where the landlord cannot base that final pro-rated bill on a actual utility bill.

#### **What the Bill Does**

HF 3951:

1. Requires landlords to provide an alternative payment method and means to request repairs and communicate with the landlord if the portal is not functioning.
2. Prohibits landlords from filing an eviction or taking any other adverse action when both the portal and the alternative are unavailable.
3. Modifies Chapter 216B (Public Utilities Act) and Chapter 504B (Landlord-Tenant Law) to allow landlords to estimate the final pro-rated utility bill when a tenant moves out if the actual bill has not yet been received. The formula is based on the previous month’s actual bill. No late fees can be charged but the monthly administrative fee of \$8 is permissible.

**Proponents:**

- Minnesota Multihousing Association
- Legal Aid

**Opponents:**

- None