



Protect Renters from Unreasonable Damage Charges HB 1300 (2022)

Tenants should not fall into debt because of exaggerated, unsubstantiated damage claims.

At the end of a tenancy, landlords have the right to hold tenants liable for damage done to the unit. But **weaknesses in current law make it easy for landlords to overcharge tenants for repairs**, and difficult for tenants to contest unfair damage claims.

Landlords only have to provide minimal proof of damage to a unit, and a vague standard for "normal wear and tear" makes it difficult for tenants to contest unfair damage charges.

Unscrupulous landlords often shift the costs of routine cleaning and maintenance onto tenants. Even short-term tenants can be **charged thousands of dollars to replace worn fixtures** like carpets and appliances that have reached the end of their useful life.

Washington should protect low-income renters who can't enter new housing because of a debt to a previous landlord that they cannot verify or contest. Tenants with unpaid debt to a previous landlord can be denied future housing based on this debt. When landlords overcharge tenants for damage and then report those charges to a collection agency, a tenant screening company, or a future landlord, it **raises a low-income tenant's risk of falling into homelessness** after the tenancy ends.

House Bill 1300 would:

- Establish a definition of "wear and tear" to clarify what constitutes a legitimate claim for damage.
- Require that landlords provide full and specific documentation of the costs of repairs at the end of tenancy.
- Protect tenants from being denied subsequent rental opportunities because of unsubstantiated damage claims from a previous landlord.

CASE EXAMPLE: A parent and her adult son with disabilities lived in a unit in Thurston County for eight years. After leaving the unit, the landlord sent them to a collection agency for a bill of over \$1,000 related to replacing the carpet. The carpet had never been replaced during the entire 8-year tenancy. The mother had trouble finding housing because of the debt that was reported to a credit reporting agency. Only after legal aid attorneys intervened did the landlord retract the debt from collections, allowing the client to find housing.

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