

What DC's Fair Housing Practices Amendment Act of 2025 Means for Landlords and Tenants

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The DC Council is moving forward with legislation that could reshape how landlords charge tenants — both during a tenancy and after a tenant moves out. The **Fair Housing Practices Amendment Act of 2025** (Bill 26-126) amends the long-standing Rental Housing Act of 1985 and, if enacted, will introduce new notice requirements, restrict certain fees, and limit how utility costs are passed along to renters.

Here's a plain-language look at what the bill does and what it could mean for you, whether you own rental property or rent your home in the District.

A New Process for Charging Tenants After Move-Out

One of the bill's central changes adds structure to how landlords pursue money owed after a tenancy ends. Under the new rules, when a tenancy terminates, the housing provider must first ask the departing tenant for a forwarding mailing or email address so that required notices can be delivered.

Within 45 days of the tenancy ending, the landlord must notify the tenant in writing — either in person or by certified mail to the tenant's last known address — of any alleged unpaid amounts. Those amounts may include unpaid rent, damage beyond ordinary wear and tear, or charges for removing items the tenant left behind.

Critically, the notice can't simply assert a dollar value. It must include documentation supporting the claim, along with a statement informing the tenant of their right to dispute it, and the landlord's contact information.

Tenants then have 30 calendar days from the date of service to dispute the charges and provide evidence that the amount is inaccurate or has been wrongly attributed to them. If a tenant does so, the landlord must respond in writing within 10 days. And before any unpaid amount can be sent to a debt collector, the landlord must be able to show that the tenant was served with the required notice at least 60 days earlier.

For landlords, the practical takeaway is clear: documentation and timing matter more than ever.

No More Service or Administration Fees for Utilities

The bill also amends a portion of the Rental Housing Act to prohibit landlords from charging tenants — before move-in, during the tenancy, or after move-out — for services the landlord is already legally required to provide. These are services tied to the implied warranty of habitability and to Titles 12 and 14 of the DC Municipal Regulations.

The legislation specifically calls out fees related to utilities, trash, locks, and administrative fees for third-party billing as

examples of charges that would no longer be permitted. While housing providers can still charge tenants for utilities based on usage, housing providers are forbidden from adding service or administration fees onto tenants' ledger.

Limits on Billing Tenants for Common-Area and Vacant-Unit Utilities

Beginning January 1, 2027, landlords — and any third party they contract with — will be prohibited from separately billing tenants, outside of monthly rent, for utilities accrued by a building's common spaces or vacant units.

The bill defines common spaces broadly to include lobbies, leasing offices, business centers, pools, and fitness centers. "Utility" is likewise defined to cover electricity, gas, sewage and wastewater service, water, and internet or telephone usage.

Importantly, the bill does not ban all utility cost-sharing. It expressly preserves the use of a Ratio Utility Billing System (RUBS), which allocates master-metered utility costs among tenants using a formula, such as one based on square footage, occupancy, or number of bedrooms. In other words, landlords can continue to distribute a building's actual metered utility costs among occupied units. What they cannot do is make tenants pay specifically for empty units and shared amenity spaces.

What This Means for You

If you own or manage rental property in the District, now is the time to review your lease agreements, fee structures, and move-out procedures so you're prepared well before the amended provisions take effect. Procedures regarding security deposit disposition and sending unpaid rent to collections will need to be updated and standardized.

Every situation is different, and the way this legislation applies will depend on the specific facts of your lease and circumstances.