

**Department of Planning and Budget**  
**2021 Fiscal Impact Statement**

**1. Bill Number:** SB1215

**House of Origin**     Introduced     Substitute     Engrossed  
**Second House**     In Committee     Substitute     Enrolled

**2. Patron:**    Ebbin

**3. Committee:** General Laws and Technology

**4. Title:**    Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act; tenant remedies for exclusion from dwelling unit.

**5. Summary:** Provides that a general district court shall enter an order upon petition by a tenant that his landlord has (i) removed or excluded the tenant from the dwelling unit unlawfully, (ii) interrupted or caused the interruption of an essential service to the tenant, or (iii) taken action to make the premises unsafe for habitation. The bill allows entry of a preliminary order ex parte to require the landlord to allow the tenant to recover possession of the dwelling unit, resume any such interrupted essential service, or fix any willful actions taken by the landlord or his agent to make the premises unsafe for habitation if there is good cause to do so and the tenant made reasonable efforts to notify the landlord of the hearing. The bill requires that any ex parte order entered shall further indicate a date for a full hearing on the petition that is no later than 10 days from the initial hearing date. Finally, the bill provides that, at a full hearing on such petition and upon proper evidence presented, the tenant shall recover actual damages, the greater of \$5,000 or four months' rent, and reasonable attorney fees.

**6. Budget Amendment Necessary:** No.

**7. Fiscal Impact Estimates:** Preliminary.

**8. Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Housing and Community Development has no oversight or administrative obligations regarding the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act. The department does update and publish on its website the Landlord Tenant Handbook. Any legislative changes made to the Act will be updated, but the department can do so using current resources. This bill may impact the court system.

**9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected:** Department of Housing and Community Development; courts.

**10. Technical Amendment Necessary:** No.

**11. Other Comments:** HB1900, as introduced, is the companion to this bill.