

SENATE BILL NO. 954

June 26, 2024, Introduced by Senators MOSS and CAVANAGH and referred to the Committee on Finance, Insurance, and Consumer Protection.

A bill to prohibit excessive pricing for certain lodgings during a declared state of emergency; to provide remedies and penalties; and to provide for the powers and duties of certain state and local governmental officers and entities.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

1 Sec. 1. This act may be cited as the "hotel and lodging
2 pricing protection act".

3 Sec. 2. As used in this act:

1 (a) "Declaration of emergency" means a declaration of a state
2 of emergency.

3 (b) "Excessively increased price" means a price that
4 demonstrates an unjustified disparity between the price of lodging
5 advertised, or offered for sale or rent, for the market where the
6 lodging is located, immediately before a declaration of emergency
7 and the price of lodging advertised, or offered for sale or rent,
8 in that market during or reasonably after a declaration of
9 emergency. As used in this subdivision, an unjustified disparity is
10 a disparity of more than 10% unless the person offering, selling,
11 or renting lodging can demonstrate that the increase in price is
12 attributable to an increase in the cost of the goods or labor used
13 in its business, an extraordinary discount in effect before the
14 declaration of emergency, or a seasonal adjustment in rates that is
15 regularly scheduled.

16 (c) "Lodging" means a building or structure kept, used,
17 maintained as, or held out to the public to be an inn, hotel, or
18 public lodging house. Lodging includes, but is not limited to, all
19 of the following:

20 (i) A full-service hotel, limited-service hotel, resort,
21 conference center, extended-stay hotel, vacation ownership, or
22 convention hotel offering permanent or temporary stays.

23 (ii) A bed and breakfast.

24 (iii) A space rented in a mobile home park or campground.

25 (d) "State of emergency" means a natural or man-made disaster
26 or emergency resulting from a tornado, earthquake, flood, fire,
27 riot, storm, act of war, threat of war, military action, or period
28 of instability following a terrorist attack, or a threat to the
29 public health, for which a state of emergency is declared by the

1 governor under the laws of this state.

2 Sec. 3. During or reasonably after a declaration of emergency,
3 a person engaged in the business of offering, selling, or renting
4 lodging shall not do any of the following:

5 (a) Charge a price that is grossly in excess of the price at
6 which similar lodging is advertised, offered, or sold.

7 (b) Charge an excessively increased price for lodging.

8 (c) Offer lodging for sale or rent at an excessively increased
9 price.

10 Sec. 4. (1) If the attorney general or a local prosecuting
11 attorney has reasonable cause to believe that an individual has
12 information or is in possession, custody, or control of any
13 document or other tangible object relevant to an investigation for
14 a violation of this act, the attorney general or prosecuting
15 attorney may serve on the individual a written demand to appear and
16 be examined under oath, and to produce the documents or object for
17 inspection and copying. The demand must meet all of the following:

18 (a) Be served upon the individual in the manner prescribed for
19 service of process under the law of this state.

20 (b) Describe the nature of the conduct constituting the
21 violation under investigation.

22 (c) Describe the document or object with sufficient
23 definiteness to permit it to be fairly identified.

24 (d) If requested, contain a copy of the written
25 interrogatories.

26 (e) Prescribe a reasonable time at which the individual must
27 appear to testify and within which the individual must answer the
28 written interrogatories and the document or object must be
29 produced.

1 (f) Advise the individual that objections to or reasons for
2 not complying with the demand may be filed with the attorney
3 general or prosecuting attorney on or before the time described in
4 subdivision (e).

5 (g) Specify a place for the taking of testimony, or for
6 production, and designate the individual who is to be the custodian
7 of the document or object.

8 (h) Contain a copy of the language provided in subsection (2)
9 with appropriate citation.

10 (2) If an individual fails to comply with the written demand
11 served under subsection (1), the attorney general or a local
12 prosecuting attorney may file an action to enforce the demand.
13 Notice of hearing and a copy of the pleadings and other relevant
14 papers must be served upon the individual, who may appear in
15 opposition. If the court finds that the demand is proper, the court
16 shall order the individual to comply with the demand, subject to
17 modification as the court may prescribe. Upon motion by the
18 individual and for good cause shown, the court may make any further
19 order in the proceedings that justice requires to protect the
20 individual from unreasonable burden or expense.

21 (3) An action filed under subsection (2) must be filed in the
22 circuit court of the county in which the individual resides or in
23 which the individual maintains a principal place of business within
24 this state, or in the circuit court for the county of Ingham.

25 (4) The fact that an investigative demand has been issued is
26 not confidential, but the testimony taken and material produced
27 during the investigation must be kept confidential unless an
28 enforcement action is brought against a person for violation of
29 this act. Once the action is filed, the investigative material may

1 be disclosed in the course of discovery, pursuant to a protective
2 order if the court deems appropriate, and in support of or
3 opposition to the claims and defenses raised in the action, but in
4 all other respects remains confidential.

5 Sec. 5. (1) The attorney general may bring a class action on
6 behalf of persons residing in or injured in this state for the
7 actual damages caused by conduct prohibited under section 3 to
8 recover actual damages or \$100.00, whichever is greater.

9 (2) On motion of the attorney general and without bond in an
10 action brought under this section, the court may make an
11 appropriate order to do any of the following:

12 (a) Reimburse persons who have suffered damages.

13 (b) Carry out a transaction in accordance with the aggrieved
14 persons' reasonable expectations.

15 (c) Strike or limit the application of unconscionable clauses
16 of contracts to avoid an unconscionable result.

17 (d) Grant other appropriate relief.

18 (3) The court after a hearing may appoint a receiver or order
19 sequestration of the defendant's assets if it appears to the
20 satisfaction of the court that the defendant threatens or is about
21 to remove, conceal, or dispose of the defendant's assets to the
22 detriment of members of the class.

23 (4) If at any stage of the proceedings under this section the
24 court requires that notice be sent to the class, the attorney
25 general may petition the court to require the defendant to bear the
26 cost of the notice. In determining whether to impose the cost on
27 the defendant, the court shall consider the probability that the
28 attorney general will succeed on the merits of the action.

29 (5) If the defendant shows by a preponderance of the evidence

1 that a violation of this act resulted from a bona fide error
2 notwithstanding the maintenance of procedures reasonably adopted to
3 avoid the error, the amount of recovery must be limited to actual
4 damages.

5 (6) The attorney general shall not bring an action under this
6 section more than 6 years after the occurrence of the method, act,
7 or practice that is the subject of the action and not more than 1
8 year after the last payment in a transaction involving the method,
9 act, or practice that is the subject of the action, whichever
10 period of time ends on a later date.

11 Sec. 6. (1) The attorney general may bring an action for
12 appropriate injunctive or other equitable relief and civil
13 penalties in the name of the people of this state for a violation
14 of this act. The court may impose a civil fine for each violation
15 of this act. For an individual, the civil fine must not be more
16 than \$10,000.00 per violation. For a person other than an
17 individual, the civil fine must not be more than \$1,000,000.00 per
18 violation.

19 (2) The state, a political subdivision, or a public agency
20 injured directly or indirectly by a violation of this act may bring
21 an action for appropriate injunctive or other equitable relief,
22 actual damages sustained by reason of a violation of this act and,
23 as determined by the court, interest on those damages from the date
24 of the complaint, and taxable costs. If the trier of fact finds
25 that the violation is flagrant, it may increase recovery to an
26 amount not to exceed 3 times the actual damages sustained by reason
27 of the violation.

28 Sec. 7. A person that violates section 3 with the intent to
29 accomplish a result prohibited by this act is guilty of a

1 misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 1 year or
2 a fine of not more than \$10,000.00, or both, if an individual, or a
3 fine of not more than \$1,000,000.00 if a person other than an
4 individual.

5 Sec. 8. The remedies provided in this act are cumulative.

6 Sec. 9. If a witness has been or may be called to testify or
7 provide other information at a proceeding under or related to this
8 act, the circuit court for the county in which the proceeding is or
9 may be held may issue, upon application of the attorney general,
10 asserting that in the attorney general's judgment the testimony or
11 other information may be necessary to the public interest and that
12 the witness has refused or is likely to refuse to testify, an order
13 requiring the witness to give testimony or provide other
14 information that the witness refuses to give or provide on the
15 basis of the privilege against self-incrimination, if the court
16 provides in its order that the witness shall not be prosecuted or
17 subjected to any penalty or forfeiture for, or on account of, any
18 transaction, occurrence, matter, or thing to which the witness
19 testifies or provides other information or evidence, documentary or
20 otherwise, and that the testimony, information, or evidence must
21 not be used against the witness in any criminal investigation,
22 proceeding, or trial, except a prosecution for perjury for giving a
23 false statement or for otherwise failing to comply with the order.

24 Sec. 10. This act does not exempt, limit, or impair the
25 attorney general's ability to investigate, determine, or impose
26 liability under the Michigan consumer protection act, 1976 PA 331,
27 MCL 445.901 to 445.922, or any other law of this state.

28 Sec. 11. This act does not prohibit an owner from evicting a
29 tenant for a lawful reason.

1 Enacting section 1. This act does not take effect unless all
2 of the following bills of the 102nd Legislature are enacted into
3 law:

4 (a) Senate Bill No. 955.

5

6 (b) Senate Bill No. 956.