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Senator Darryl E. Rouson, Representative Fentrice Driskell, and Representative Dianne Hart File Legislation Related To Eviction Records and Addressing Housing Insecurity

TALLAHASSEE, FL –During the Florida Legislature’s second committee week, **Senator Darryl E. Rouson (D- St. Petersburg)** filed [Senate Bill 412](#) and [Senate Bill 926](#) to address eviction records and housing insecurity. **Representative Fentrice Driskell (D- Tampa)** filed [House Bill 481](#), the companion bill to SB 412 related to residential evictions. **Representative Dianne Hart (D- Tampa)** will be filing the companion bill to SB 926 related to court-ordered sealing of eviction records.

The two pieces of legislation will address the looming threat of eviction that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. SB 412/ HB 481 will help address housing insecurity by referring matters of eviction to mediation in circuits that have an established mediation program and by removing the requirement for the tenant to deposit the monies owed during eviction proceedings into the court registry. SB 926 related to Eviction Records allows for defendants to motion to seal their eviction record if the court finds they were adversely affected by COVID-19. If eviction records for tenants that were adversely impacted by COVID-19 are publicly searchable, landlords are more likely to refuse to rent to such tenants.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has determined that a

public health emergency exists as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and studies have shown that the availability of adequate housing has a direct impact on a person's health. "These bills are crucial in addressing housing insecurity by encouraging the use of a mediator to discuss options for tenants and landlords prior to the eviction proceedings taking place," said **Senator Rouson**.

"Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Floridians were already laboring through an affordable housing crisis. A report by the Office of the State Courts Administrator indicates that between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020, 47,484 new evictions have been filed statewide. This number would have not been as low if it were not for the state or federal eviction moratoriums put in place during different periods of the pandemic. My office is honored to sponsor a housing security bill that will afford stability during these unprecedented times, level the playing field for tenants as well as landlords and keep Floridians in their homes," said **Representative Driskell**.

"I look forward to working to pass legislation that will seal the file of individuals evicted due to a loss of income and other circumstances beyond their control because of COVID-19. We have seen a record number of evictions this past year, and we must protect those families from further hardship," said **Representative Hart**.

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