

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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SENATE BILL 1466
Agriculture/Environment/Natural Resources Committee Substitute Adopted
4/24/07
Agriculture/Environment/Natural Resources Committee Substitute #2 Adopted
5/14/07
Fourth Edition Engrossed 5/23/07

Short Title: Migrant Housing Health/Safety.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 26, 2007

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO MAKE CHANGES RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY TO THE
MIGRANT HOUSING ACT OF NORTH CAROLINA AND TO DIRECT THE
NORTH CAROLINA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY TO STUDY THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A LOW-INTEREST LOAN PROGRAM FOR
AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 95-223 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(3a) "Director" means the Director of the Agricultural Safety and Health Bureau, who is the agent designated by the Commissioner to assist in the administration of this Article."

SECTION 2. G.S. 95-224 reads as rewritten:

"§ 95-224. ~~Scope.~~ Scope; powers and duties.

(a) The provisions of this Article shall apply to all operators and migrants except:

(1) Any person who, in the ordinary course of that person's business, regularly provides housing on a commercial basis to the general public; and who provides housing to migrants of the same character and on the same or comparable terms and conditions as those provided to the general public; or

(2) A housing unit owned by one or more of the occupants and occupied solely by a family unit.

(b) The Commissioner shall have the following powers and duties:

(1) To delegate to the Director the powers, duties, and responsibilities necessary to ensure safe and healthy migrant housing conditions.

(2) To supervise the Director.

1 (3) To issue preoccupancy certificates to certify that housing for migrant
2 workers has been found to be in compliance with this Article.

3 (4) To conduct post-occupancy inspections of migrant housing in
4 accordance with the provisions of G.S. 95-226(g)."

5 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 95-225 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

6 "(h) Each migrant shall be provided with a bed that shall include a mattress in
7 good repair with a clean cover. The Department inspector shall determine the condition
8 of the mattress and cover during the preoccupancy inspection. If the mattress or cover is
9 damaged beyond normal wear and tear during the migrant's occupancy of the housing,
10 the operator may charge the migrant the reasonable cost of replacing the mattress or
11 cover."

12 **SECTION 4.** G.S. 95-226 is amended by adding two new subsections to
13 read:

14 "(f) If an operator receives a preoccupancy inspection rating from the Department
15 of one hundred percent (100%) compliance for two consecutive years, in the third year
16 the operator shall have the right to conduct the preoccupancy inspection himself or
17 herself. Operators conducting their own inspections pursuant to this subsection shall, at
18 least 45 days prior to occupancy, register their migrant housing with the Department and
19 have the local health department inspect and approve the water and septic systems.

20 (g) In addition to any other applicable federal or State law or regulation, the
21 Department may only conduct a post-occupancy inspection of operators:

22 (1) Who were subject to an annual preoccupancy inspection by the
23 Department and found not to be in one hundred percent (100%)
24 compliance at that inspection.

25 (2) Who were assessed a civil penalty by the Department during the
26 previous calendar year for violations of this Article or pursuant to
27 G.S. 95-136(a)(3).

28 (3) Who did not undergo a preoccupancy inspection, unless the operator
29 conducted a self-inspection pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

30 (4) In response to a referral from a federal, State, county, or local
31 government official or any person with firsthand knowledge of an
32 alleged violation of this Article or of an alleged safety or health hazard
33 whom the Department deems to have provided a credible referral."

34 **SECTION 5.** G.S. 95-227 reads as rewritten:

35 "**§ 95-227. Enforcement.**

36 (a) For the purpose of enforcing the standards provided by this Article, the
37 provisions of G.S. 95-129, G.S. 95-130 and G.S. 95-136 through G.S. 95-142 shall
38 apply under this Article in a similar manner as they apply to places of employment
39 under OSHANC; however, G.S. 95-129(4), 95-130(2), and 95-130(6) do not apply to
40 migrant housing. For the purposes of this Article, the term:

41 (1) "Employer" in G.S. 95-129, G.S. 95-130 and G.S. 95-136 through
42 G.S. 95-142 shall be construed to mean an ~~operator~~; operator.

43 (2) "Employee" shall be construed to mean a ~~migrant~~; and migrant.

1 ~~(3) "Director" shall mean the agent designated by the Commissioner to~~
2 ~~assist in the administration of this Article.~~

3 (b) The Commissioner may establish a new division to enforce this Article.

4 (c) The Department of Labor of North Carolina shall maintain a list of operators
5 and the physical address of their migrant housing units, number of beds, and the date of
6 the annual preoccupancy inspection and certification.

7 (d) The Department shall maintain a summary of any inspections filed annually
8 with the Division that enforces this Article, including the number and type of citations
9 issued and the violations found, if any.

10 (e) If the Department determines that housing provided to migrants is
11 uninhabitable, but is not reasonably expected to cause death or serious physical harm,
12 the migrants shall be allowed to remain in the housing for a reasonable period, not to
13 exceed 14 days, while the operator locates alternative housing or makes such repairs as
14 to render the housing habitable. No additional civil penalties arising from the condition
15 of that housing shall be levied against the operator during the 14-day period after the
16 housing has been determined to be uninhabitable in which the migrants are allowed to
17 remain in the housing. The alternative housing shall be provided at the same rate or less
18 than the rate paid by the migrants for the uninhabitable housing. If the Director
19 determines, after recommendation by an inspector, that housing provided to migrants
20 could reasonably be expected to cause death or serious physical harm immediately or
21 before the imminence of such danger can be eliminated, the migrants shall not be
22 allowed to stay in the housing, and alternative housing shall be provided by the operator
23 at the same rate or less than the rate paid by the migrants for the uninhabitable housing.

24 (f) The Commissioner shall report no later than May 1 of each year to the
25 Chairpersons of the Natural and Economic Resources Subcommittees of the House of
26 Representatives and Senate Committees on Appropriations regarding the number of
27 annual preoccupancy certifications issued, the number of operators with one hundred
28 percent (100%) compliance at the preoccupancy inspection, the number of post-
29 occupancy inspections conducted by the Department, the number and type of citations
30 and fines issued, the total number of migrant worker beds in the State, and the
31 identification of operators who fail to apply for or obtain permits to operate migrant
32 housing pursuant to this Article.

33 (g) At the time the Department of Labor conducts a preoccupancy inspection, the
34 Department shall provide the operator with a copy of the guide for employers on
35 compliance with the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101 et seq., as
36 amended, prepared by the United States Department of Justice."

37 **SECTION 6.** The North Carolina Housing Finance Agency shall study (i)
38 the need for low-cost financing for the construction and rehabilitation of migrant
39 housing in North Carolina and (ii) the feasibility of a program to provide such financing
40 in the State. The Agency shall report its findings no later than July 1, 2008, to the Joint
41 Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations.

42 **SECTION 7.** The first report required by G.S. 95-227(f), as enacted by
43 Section 5 of this act, is due no later than May 1, 2008.

44 **SECTION 8.** This act is effective when it becomes law.