



BILL NO: Senate Bill 6
TITLE: Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases – Tenant Rights and Protections
(Tenant Protection Act of 2022)
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 3, 2022
POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report with amendments on SB 6.**

Senate Bill 6 confers many critical protections to tenants including those that are victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Notably SB 6 expands those qualified to provide the necessary documentation that a person is in fact a victim or survivor of domestic violence so that the victim may terminate their future liability under a residential lease. The law already permits the lease termination. Many victims of domestic violence seek assistance from service providers or medical professionals and do not utilize the protective order or peace order process. A victim of domestic violence should not be compelled to go to court and obtain a protective order or peace order to prove that they are in fact a victim and access protections available to them in Maryland law.

MNADV suggests that the definition of “Qualified Third Party” be amended in SB 6 to comport with those permitted to determine eligibility for the Address Confidentiality Program, MD STATE GOVT § 7-304. Specifically, add “documentation from a domestic violence or sexual assault prevention or assistance program,” on page 8 after line 6.

Senate Bill 6 should further be amended to strike references to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. MNADV suggests using the definition of abuse found in MD Code, Family Law, § 4-501. This is existing law. MNADV supports this definition as it reflects the current understanding and knowledge of domestic violence and includes acts such as assault, rape, and stalking. We further suggest striking the additional stalking references since they are no longer needed with the inclusion of the definition of abuse.

In addition, we suggest on page 8, line 11, striking “physical or mental injuries resulting from” as current statute does not require injury to be eligible for the relief sought.

Victims of domestic violence must often flee their homes to escape the potentially life-threatening violence they are facing. In doing so they risk homelessness with 38% of victims of domestic violence



experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives.¹ This is further complicated and exacerbated by the economic instability victims of domestic violence face, often a direct result of their abuse. Legislation such as SB 6 is critical to support victims so they can leave their abusers without facing further economic harms.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges a **favorable report with amendments on SB 6.**

¹ Charlene K. Baker, Cook, Sarah L., Norris, Fran H., "Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response," *Violence Against Women* 9, no. 7 (2003): 754-783.

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