

March 6, 2023



Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United.

I am a resident of District 41. **I am testifying in support of [SB0504](#).**

Landlords should have a just basis for non-renewing leases or cutting off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. Tenants who follow the rules should not face lease terminations for “no cause.” This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, that limit how and when lease non-renewals occur, require landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or require landlords to prove a just cause in court.

Note, this is an enabling bill, so it just gives local jurisdictions the opportunity to pass these bills if they want, so you can also come at this from a local rights perspective if you really want to.

We frequently see landlords across the state choosing to evict good tenants just to make a larger profit or in retaliation for organizing, and this bill would ensure that counties interested in protecting tenants from unjust non-renewals are able to do so.

I am encouraging you to vote **in support of [SB0504](#).**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Bonnie Weissberg
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Baltimore, MD 21209
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

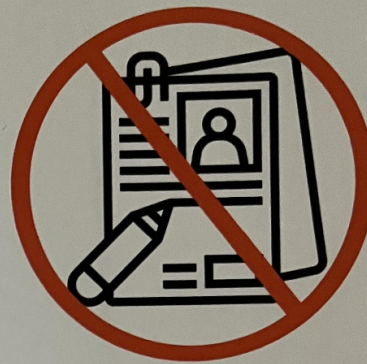
Local Enabling Legislation for Just Cause Eviction

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins
reference HB881 in 2022

When it comes to lease non-renewals, Maryland is a "no cause" state - that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew without any stated cause. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules, and must accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities.

This legislation enables Maryland counties to pass local "just cause" policies for lease non-renewals. "Just cause" means that a landlord may choose not to renew an expiring lease only if there is an acceptable basis for that decision. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what's acceptable and when.

Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to their local efforts to stabilize rental housing through just cause policies.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, as court delays and emergency rental assistance slowed the pace of non-payment eviction filings, evictions based on lease non-renewal roughly doubled.

With more tenants organizing and demanding repair and safe, healthy living conditions, landlords have retaliated with unjust and discriminatory lease non-renewals.

Requiring just cause as a precondition for an eviction is a limited requirement which boosts the stability of the market by stabilizing families, neighborhoods, and communities to ensure that no one is arbitrarily deprived of their home.

Cities such as Oakland, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia have adopted just cause eviction policies. This legislation recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

Renters United Maryland is a coalition of advocates, organizers, policymakers and renters. To learn more about our work on these priorities and other legislation, visit www.rentersunitedmaryland.org

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