



**Testimony to the House Ways and Means Committee**  
**HB651: Renters' Property Tax Relief Program - Evaluation and Reporting Requirement**  
**Position: Favorable**

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair  
House Ways & Means Committee  
Room 131, HOB  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
cc: Members, Ways & Means Committee

Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

We are in support of HB651, which allows for evaluating and expanding the income requirement for the Renters' Tax Credit by adjusting income to inflation.

For the past six years, Economic Action Maryland's SOAR (Securing Older Adult Resources) program has led efforts to promote the Renters' Tax Credit. We extensively market the program, train service providers, VITA staff, and others how to screen for it, and partner with older-adult, legal services, and financial providers to increase the number of applicants each year. In 2022, Economic Action Maryland returned \$88,243.42 in tax credits to financially fragile older adults. For renters who received tax credits, the average return was between \$300-\$500 annually.

In 2019, Maryland had the 8th highest number of renters who were cost-burdened in the country, with 48.1 % paying more than 30% of their income for housing, while many are severely cost-burdened paying more than 50% for a rental. Recent inflation levels have hit a 40 year high, and have only exacerbated the financial precarity of renters, particularly older adults. Skyrocketing rents coupled with a chronic housing shortage have left many older low-income Maryland renters at risk of displacement and housing insecurity. In 2021, 45% of our clients who are 60+ and seeking assistance through our tenants' rights program came to us with issues relating to eviction.

We stand in strong support of HB651's provision to adjust income requirements of the RTC to inflation. Doing so would extend the benefit of receiving rental tax credits to many financially and housing insecure Marylanders, allowing older adults to remain housed and age in place, increasing their economic security during these financially strenuous times. HB651 provides the examination and reporting on this issue needed to lay the path to expanding crucial benefits to low-income older adult renters.

For all of these reasons, we support HB651 and urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
Isadora Stern  
Policy Manager