



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

KATE STEWART
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 4

HB 477/SB 644 – Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Testimony of Kate Stewart, Montgomery County Councilmember, District 4

Position: SUPPORT

February 13, 2024

My name is Kate Stewart and I serve as the Montgomery County Councilmember for District 4 and as the Vice President of the Montgomery County Council. Today, I am speaking on behalf of myself in support of **Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions (House Bill 477/Senate Bill 644)**, legislation that would authorize a county to adopt local provisions that would prohibit a landlord of residential properties from failing to renew a lease without just cause. I will note the Montgomery County Council has not taken a position on this legislation to date, but in previous years has supported similar legislation.

Growing up the child of a single parent and renter, I know first hand the disruptive nature of having to move often. Prior to serving on the Montgomery County Council, renters' rights and housing affordability are issues I have worked on as Mayor of the City of Takoma Park. I have worked on many policies to create housing stability, and this legislation is a cornerstone of ensuring people have access to safe, predictable housing that allows them to plan for their lives and the future, which in turn creates stable, thriving communities. Currently, landlords can remove a tenant from their home with just 60 days notice and no reason provided. This allows landlords to evict tenants for the purpose of raising the rent or to avoid making necessary repairs, and the fear of retaliatory eviction often prevents tenants from requesting needed maintenance. HB 477 would require landlords to provide a "just cause" – established by local law or ordinance – to justify the nonrenewal of a lease or the termination of a holdover tenancy. Examples of just causes in other jurisdictions include a tenant committing a substantial breach of lease or causing substantial damage to the leased premises, engaging in illegal activity on the premises, refusing to grant the landlord access for the purpose of repairs or improvements; or if the landlord, in good faith, seeks to remove the leased premises from the rental market.

As we consider countywide policies to help keep tenants in their homes, just cause eviction is an important step to promoting equity in the community and protecting people who are vulnerable from being displaced. I urge this committee to vote favorably on **House Bill 477**. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have further questions.