



**House Bill 139 – Landlord and Tenant – Office of Home energy Programs – Financial Assistance**

**Position: Support with Amendment**

The Maryland REALTORS® supports HB 139 which will help tenants receive utility information from an owner of rental property if the utility account is in the name of the property owner.

HB 139 clarifies that landlords are required to accept financial assistance for utility payments from the Office of Home Energy Programs. This requirement is consistent with existing Maryland law which requires landlords to accept income from “any government or private assistance” under the State Government Article, 20-701.

In addition, the Real Property Article, Section 8-205.1, includes a requirement for landlords of residential property similar to another requirement in HB 139. Section 8-205.1 requires landlords to provide sewer and water bills to tenants in instances when the tenant is required to pay the bill but the landlord receives the bill. This requirement was passed in 2018 and the REALTORS® are not aware that noncompliance has been an issue to the point that fines and monetary penalties are needed. For that reason, the REALTORS® recommend the elimination of those fees in HB 139. While REALTOR® property managers have been educated about the 2018 law and how to comply with it in many continuing education courses, not every rental owner is a professional manager and could run afoul of the \$500-\$1000 fines in the bill.

With this attached amendment, the REALTORS® recommend a favorable report.

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**Amendment:**

On page 2, strike lines 18 through 25

**Summary:** This amendment strikes the authority for Human Services to fines for noncompliance.