

Date of Hearing: February 13, 2024

Rachel Kassman
Baltimore, MD 21206

TESTIMONY ON HB #0477 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Rachel Kassman

My name is Rachel Kassman. I am a resident of District 45. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0477, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

I have been a Baltimore resident since taking my first job here in the city in August 2007 - and until very recently (July 2023), I was a renter, subject to the whims of both private landlords and property management companies. This was 16 years of at least annual anxiety, never knowing if a lease would be renewed or if I would have to uproot myself and find a new home in a short period of time. 16 years of continually weighing the consequences of speaking up to get things fixed in a particular property - how many emails or calls would make me a problem tenant?

At my most recent (and final) rental home, two winters in a row saw over a week (the coldest week of the year each time), without heat. Both times it took multiple calls and emails before the situation was sorted. This was a multi-person household and the first incident left one person's room not only without heat but completely without power and it took over 6 months to get restitution for having to pay for a hotel room for multiple nights. And with every complaint, the anxiety ratcheted higher - would the property management company decide we were more trouble than our rent was worth? We would let problems sit for days or weeks, worried that our last issue was too recent and we would be seen as a problem and risk not having our lease renewed. This was emblematic of all my experiences as a renter here in Baltimore.

I have been lucky enough to not be surprised by a lease renewal denial, despite my fears, but I know many in our city have not been nearly so lucky. Feeling safe and secure in one's housing should be a given - no one should be concerned that getting something fixed or other issues addressed will jeopardize their home. The Just Cause bill will help alleviate these kinds of toxic situations and help balance the power between landlords and renters. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0477.**