



Testimony of Montgomery County Young Democrats in Support of HB 477/SB 644–Landlord and Tenant–Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies–Local Just Cause Termination Provisions–House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 13th, 2024

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

The Montgomery County Young Democrats (MCYD) urge your support for [HB 477/SB 644](#)–Landlord and Tenant-Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies–Local Just Cause Termination Provisions. This bill would allow Maryland counties to adopt local laws or ordinances prohibiting landlords from failing to renew leases or from evicting renters without just cause. HB 477 will provide renters with badly needed protections, promote housing stability and reduce evictions, and ensure more people have places to live.

MCYD is a group of young Democrats ages 14-35 who offer a voice for young people who live, work, or go to school in Montgomery County. We work to improve our county and state, and encourage young people to get involved in politics and advocacy. Since many of our members are renters, a just cause eviction bill will especially help them.

Every person, regardless of their age, race, or income, should have a safe and stable home. However, some landlords believe that their own profits are more important than the safety of their renters, and so they either let the buildings they own fall into disrepair or evict people out into the street in order to squeeze more money out of other renters. To make matters worse, landlords often retaliate against renters who organize for their

rights, who demand that necessary repairs be made to their living spaces, or who complain about violations of laws about safe housing conditions.

Just cause eviction laws protect renters from this retaliation and from being evicted for no reason at all. They promote housing stability and ensure that evictions and nonrenewals of leases have a firm basis, instead of just being dependent on the whims of landlords.

Maryland housing is quite expensive and many areas are facing a housing crisis. When a lease is not renewed, Maryland renters frequently find it difficult to find a new place to rent. They may have to pay substantially higher amounts, or move into substandard quarters, or in the worst cases, couchsurf with friends, move into a shelter, or live on the street. And getting evicted is deeply traumatizing and harmful to renters; they often lose their possessions and afterward find it difficult or even impossible to obtain new housing.

HB 477 will protect renters from abuses and help build a Maryland where everyone has a safe place to live. The bill gives counties the power to prohibit landlords from not renewing leases or from evicting people without just cause. Just cause includes the following reasons:

- 1) Renters committing substantial breaches of the lease or causing substantial damage to the property;
- 2) Renters failing to stop disorderly conduct that disturbs the peace and quiet of other renters;
- 3) Renters engaging in illegal activity on the property;
- 4) Renters refusing to grant the landlord access to the property for the purpose of inspecting or making needed repairs, without good reason;
- 5) Landlords seeking to recover the property for their own use or the use of their family; and
- 6) Landlords seeking to permanently remove the property from the rental market.

This bill includes sufficient causes so landlords can make a living but also allows for substantial protection of renters, if counties so choose. We thank Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins and Vaughn Stewart for their sponsorship of HB 477 and urge your support for this bill.

Please contact us at mocoyoungdems@gmail.com with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Montgomery County Young Democrats