



**Senate Bill 82 – Criminal Law - Counterfeiting and Possession of Counterfeit Lease  
- Penalty**

**Position: Support**

Maryland REALTORS® supports SB 82, which addresses the production of fraudulent leases, which are often used in the practice of “squatting.”

Recognizing the increased incidents of squatting in residential properties, the General Assembly passed legislation in 2025 to expedite the court process for property owners to remove squatters. REALTORS® are appreciative of those efforts but believe that additional steps can and should be taken against those who facilitate this illegal activity.

Often, squatting involves the use of forged leases or other documents which on initial review might indicate individuals have a right to occupy the residence when they do not. These documents could be produced by the squatters themselves, or in some instances, can be used to deceive tenants into thinking they are entering into a legitimate rental agreement.

In fact, scammers are currently using AI-powered lease generation sites and apps to forge leases, even offering “move-in packages” to potential property occupants in exchange for cash payments. Those occupants may have full knowledge that the lease is counterfeit, or they may have none. That is where SB 82’s adherence to a knowing and willful intent to defraud can be used to target the networks of criminal actors, while protecting those who were unwilling victims of leasing fraud.

For these reasons, Maryland REALTORS® asks for your favorable report on SB 82.

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