

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY on SB 82

THE WEAPONIZATION OF PROPERTY THEFT

From: Ze Wang, PhD, Professor at University of Maryland School of Medicine
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I, Ze Wang, swear under the penalties of perjury that the following statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge!

The Theft of a Primary Residence

My name is Ze Wang. I am a Professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. I am writing to you today not just as a homeowner, but as a victim of a growing "dark market" for property theft that exploits Maryland's current legal loopholes.

In January 2020, I purchased a townhouse at 824 Ryan St, Baltimore, to serve as my primary residence during the work week while my family remained in Pennsylvania. In March 2025, facing the immense financial pressure of \$140,000 in annual college tuition for my two daughters, I placed this home on the market. Meanwhile, I still live in the house during work days.

On January 7, 2026, I returned from a brief holiday break to find my home stolen.

The Failure of Current "Civil" Protections

Upon discovering an unauthorized woman inside my home, I found physical evidence of a criminal break-in: a torn window screen, pry marks on the frame, and a stolen Realtor lockbox. Despite this, the occupant presented a "sham lease" signed by a stranger named "Samuel." Because of this single piece of fraudulent paper, the police informed me that a clear criminal act was now a "civil matter."

Worse yet, the occupant attempted to **extort me**, demanding **\$5,000 in cash** to vacate my own property. This is not the behavior of a "scammed tenant"; it is the behavior of a professional squatter who knows that the "civil matter" designation gives them the leverage to hold a homeowner's property for ransom.

To further obstruct justice, the occupant weaponized federal protections by claiming her husband is in the military—a clear attempt to trigger a 90-day stay under the **Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)**. When I sought police assistance to re-identify her after discovering she had provided multiple aliases, she **threatened to sue me for harassment**.

Most distressingly, she **illegally changed the locks**, physically excluding me from my own home. While I am forced to sleep in my office and my car, she is inside **using my personal bed, my mattresses, and my furniture**. The law currently protects her right to sleep in my bed while I am left homeless.

The Professional Squatter's Playbook

My experience highlights exactly how the current system is being weaponized against innocent homeowners:

1. **Identity Theft as a Legal Shield:** The occupant provided the police with the name of an active-duty Navy member. This was a calculated move to trigger the **Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)**, which can force a 90-day delay in proceedings. She later provided two more aliases to the police and the court to frustrate the service of process.
2. **Exploitation of the "Victim" Narrative:** This occupant claims to have paid \$2,750 for six months of rent—a price so absurdly low (\$458/month for a luxury townhouse) that it is an obvious sham. Yet, the law currently allows her to remain in my home while I am forced to sleep in my office and my car.
3. **Utility and Property Theft:** While I am excluded from my home, the occupant is using my furniture, my mattresses, and my utilities. My BGE data shows a massive spike in usage starting Christmas Day—the moment my home was invaded.

A Plea for Legislative Change

I am incredibly grateful for the expedited hearing provisions in **SB 46 (2025)**, which allowed my case to be heard in weeks rather than months. However, my case proves that even more must be done:

- **Immediate Verification:** When a homeowner can prove forced entry (broken windows/stolen lockboxes), the "sham lease" should not stop police from removing a trespasser.
- **Verification of Military Status:** Squatters should face immediate criminal penalties for falsely claiming military status to delay evictions.
- **Automatic investigation of crimes for providing wrong identities and fraudulent lease.**
- **Protection of Primary Residences:** A homeowner should never be made homeless by a trespasser while waiting for a court date.

The law must stop creating new victims in the name of "due process" for criminals. I urge you to continue your work to ensure that when a home is stolen, the justice system acts with the same speed as the crime itself. Please vote to support the passage of SB 82.