



Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership  
20 South Charles Street, Suite 801  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201  
410-223-2222  
www.brhp.org

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## HB 744 - Support Tenant Protection Act

Testimony of Adria Crutchfield, Executive Director, [acrutchfield@brhp.org](mailto:acrutchfield@brhp.org)  
The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership  
Environment and Transportation Committee, February 18, 2020

The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership is a nonprofit organization that operates a housing mobility program located in the Baltimore region. We exist to expand housing choices for families with low incomes, helping them to access and transition successfully to safe, healthy, and economically vibrant communities. We do this by offering educational workshops, financial and housing search counseling, rental subsidies, and post-move support to our clients as they move out of areas of concentrated poverty and into areas of opportunity across Baltimore City and the surrounding counties.

BRHP is committed to guaranteeing that our families are supported, not only by us, but by the government that oversees their rights as tenants. We fully support the passage of the Tenant Protection Act. In particular, we support the clause that allows tenants to break a lease due to unaddressed, dangerous conditions in their home without penalty to the tenant. Many of the landlords that provide homes for BRHP clients are supportive, responsive, and committed to making sure their tenants are safe in their homes. Unfortunately, occasionally our clients run into landlords who are unwilling to meet the quality or safety standards that all people deserve. HB744 would ensure that these landlords are held accountable for meeting their responsibilities and that tenants are safely housed.

In addition, the Tenant Protection Act expands opportunity for tenants who are experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking to escape a dangerous situation. While domestic violence is often under-reported, there were more than 15,000 domestic violence related crimes in 2016 in Maryland, and women with low-incomes are more likely to experience domestic violence. BRHP is holistic in our support of our clients and understand the mental and physical toll that these situations can take on a person. The requirement for these individuals to provide a protective order can deter them from taking action. Tenant law has the power to ease the burden these individuals face. Accepting a report by a qualified party, such as a physician, psychologist, or social worker, in lieu of a court filing would allow these individuals to take the life-saving step of exiting a dangerous situation.

These, along with the other tenant protections included in the Tenant Protection Act, are imperative to improving the lives of over 4,300 BRHP clients and 350,000 other renters in the Baltimore region who do not have organizational power backing them. BRHP urges passage of HB744.