



TESTIMONY
Maryland General Assembly
Environmental and Transportation Committee
In Favor of HB821

Matt Losak 301-588-3987
Executive Director, Montgomery County Renters Alliance, Inc.
March 10, 2020

Good afternoon, Committee Members. My name is Matt Losak and I am a co-founder and executive director of the Montgomery County Renters Alliance—a coalition of more than 30 labor, community, religious, political and civic action organizations and thousands of renters. We are Maryland’s first and only organized voice dedicated exclusively to renter outreach, education, organizing and advocacy.

The Renters Alliance **is in favor of HB821—The Stable Homes Act.**

I will not belabor the reasons why this act is reasonable and urgent for large and growing population in Montgomery County. Instead, I want to address this committee’s objections directly.

We know that there is no evidence that this legislation will increase court litigation. In all the jurisdictions with just-cause protection, no such increase in case filings has occurred.

We know that no industry welcomes regulation, but we also know that reasonable regulations such as this, are no obstacle to any industry that stands to make substantial profits in a region where demand for housing is among the highest in the nation. In New York, New Jersey, California, Seattle and other locations, rental housing stocks are the most profitable and valuable in the world. The obstacles for building are not reasonable protections, but land values and access to capital.

We know, and we have seen, that any landlord with a good reason to evict a renter from their home has more than enough tools to do so. This legislation does not make it more difficult to evict truly problem tenants, but it does make it more difficult to evict families, the elderly, young couples with children and individuals renting their homes from being evicted for pursuing their rights to promised or required services, property maintenance and community rights to organize.

This bill is no challenge to contract law. No contract in our country can be drawn up in a vacuum free from laws that protect the public interest. Apartment leases are not a license to demand money from renters without an obligation to provide quality, properly maintained, stable homes. Leases that allow for eviction by nonrenewal at the end of their term without justification are not

in the public interest, and for landlords acting in good faith, they are not in the landlord's interest either.

We urge you, Chairman Barve and committee members to recognize that the Montgomery County Council, Executive, the vast majority of its elected delegation and its major civic organizations have demanded that the legislature permit Montgomery County this protection. If it true that you make your objections to this bill in good faith, without the influence of well-financed industry lobbyists, then allow Montgomery the local courtesy of passing this bill. We can think of no better county to use as a proving ground for just-cause protections. We have enacted other protections in Montgomery County against similar industry objections, and building continues, and the sky has not fallen.

We strongly urge a favorable report.

Thank you

###