

**Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Tenant Rights and Protections (Tenant Protection Act of 2021)**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Steward

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation

**Organization Submitting:** Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

**Person Submitting:** Jared Schablein, LSPC Chair

**Position: FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0050 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive movement on the Lower Eastern Shore.

Protecting the rights of tenants and ensuring they don't face abuse or get taken advantage of is a top priority of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus and our members. HB0050 is a common-sense bill that achieves this crucial goal.

The bill creates transparency between landlords and tenants on utilities by requiring a landlord to make a certain disclosure to prospective tenants if the landlord uses a ratio utility billing system. The bill also has a provision requiring landlords to provide tenants with information to document a bill for certain utilities. These requirements will make utilities more transparent and create conditions in which it is harder to take advantage of tenants.

Another provision in this bill requires that a certain lease provision become unenforceable if a landlord fails to make a certain disclosure. Once again this would improve transparency and force landlords to be upfront with their tenants. This too will reduce the chances of tenants being taken advantage of and put in bad situations by bad faith actors.

Finally this bill would ensure that a tenant organization has the right of free assembly in certain areas within an apartment facility during reasonable hours and on reasonable notice to the landlord. This would enshrine and protect the rights of tenants in law. The ability to organize as tenants is crucial in ensuring their rights are protected and they have the power to improve their conditions and prevent any unfair situation from arising.

It is for these reasons the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.