



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB104**  
**An Act concerning Tenant-Landlord - Nonrenewal of Lease - Notice Requirements**

Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart

January 26th, 2021 • Environment and Transportation Committee

What the Bill Does

**HB104 will extend the amount of notice a landlord has to give a tenant before not renewing their lease, giving the tenant more time to find new housing.** The bill mandates varying notification lengths depending on the length of previous tenancy, type of lease, and type of residence. For parties with a lease longer than week-by-week, up to and including month-by-month, the notification must come two months before nonrenewal, provided the resident has lived in the property for less than two years; if the resident has lived there for more than two years, this period increases to three months. For parties with a year-to-year non-farm lease, landlords must give three months notice; for year-to-year farm properties, the resident must have six months notice. Finally, if parties are on a weekly agreement, the landlord must give a one week notice for written leases and three weeks notice for unwritten leases.

Why the Bill Is Important

The pandemic has exploited a disastrous loophole in our housing process. While evictions may be halted by executive order or legislative act, landlords can circumvent the rule by simply not renewing an individual's lease — even for no reason; thus, landlords can evict during an eviction stay, just under a different name. If this continues as an option for the landlords, tenants should, at the very least, be provided time to find new housing.

It's understandable that in some cases, landlords no longer want to rent to a specific tenant — perhaps because of messiness, disturbances, or a myriad of other factors. However, the stakes of lease nonrenewal are significantly different for each side of the party. For landlords, the burden of not renewing a lease can be significant, but is often minimal; they may lose income while trying to find a new tenant, but this can be quickly made up. On the other hand, the tenant is left without a home. Without a nearby friend or relative, they may even be forced onto the streets — an even more dangerous proposition during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. And for those that have been tenants for a substantial period of time, the shock and inexperience that accompanies the notice could make the process of finding new housing all the more onerous.

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### Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably

The last thing Maryland needs right now is more of its citizens living on the streets, particularly considering the continuing coronavirus danger. HB104 would offer tenants slightly more time to figure out their living situation before facing homelessness. The changes proposed are simple, straightforward, and based on the laws of other states; several states already require longer notification for a landlord's lease nonrenewal, including a sixty-day requirement in Delaware, Georgia, and Vermont. If landlords are not going to renew the leases of vulnerable tenants, the very least they can do is give them fair warning.

**Marylanders should not be thrown into homelessness with only 30 days notice. I urge a favorable report.**