



**Matt Losak, Executive Director  
1001 Spring Street  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
In favor of HB 523  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Tuesday, March 30, 2021**

Good afternoon Chairman Smith and Vice-Chairman Waldstreicher and committee members. My name is Matt Losak and I am a co-founder and Executive Director of the Montgomery County Renters Alliance—an alliance of more than 30 labor, community, religious, political and civic action organizations and thousands of renters. We are Maryland’s first and only regional nonprofit dedicated exclusively to renter outreach, education, organizing and advocacy.

Senators, there is no excuse for our courts to ignore lawbreaking landlords on one hand while enforcing lease provisions against tenants living in substandard conditions on the other hand. Laws that require licensure and code standards, including lead paint abatement and removal are basic measures to ensure safe habitable spaces for families to live. Yet some landlords ignored these requirements.

We support HB 523 to ensure that landlords demonstrate compliance with rental licensing and lead inspection laws as a prerequisite to filing a Failure to Pay Rent action against a tenant. We believe this is the best way to ensure compliance.

We also support amendments to ensure that this law applies uniformly across both counties and municipalities. Importantly, the bill also needs amendments to clarify the intent of the bill – that landlords should demonstrate a valid lead inspection certificate to the court, not just their Department of Environment registration.

We urge this Committee to put the teeth back into rental housing code and licensure enforcement. We support each of the Public Justice Center’s recommended amendments and urge a favorable report.

Thank you.

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