



February 17, 2021

House Bill 729

Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Actions - Filing Surcharge and Prohibited Lease Provisions

House Judiciary Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 729 - Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Actions - Filing Surcharge and Prohibited Lease Provisions. This Bill would increase the filing surcharge for filing a civil case for summary ejection in District Court and prohibit a court from imposing or assessing the surcharge against a tenant.

Maryland has by far one of the lowest filing fees for eviction cases of any state in the country. It consequently is an outlier in having one of the highest filing rates. While many states impose surcharge fees in excess of \$300 and the nationwide average is \$122, filing an eviction case in Maryland costs a landlord just \$15. As a result, Maryland's eviction rate is in excess of 80%. Some Maryland jurisdictions have rates exceeding 100%, meaning that there are more eviction cases filed than there are rental housing units, and that some renters are having multiple cases filed against them. This is a stark contrast to our neighboring jurisdictions with significantly lower rates; Pennsylvania has a rate of 5.3% and Delaware's is 16.9%. Rates in New Jersey, the District of Columbia, and Virginia range from 12.5% to 15.7%.

This process is unfair and burdensome on renters, and has only been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on low-paid workers. Shelter is one of the most essential needs of our residents and a structure that allows landlords to easily file eviction cases as part of the routine rent collection process, rather than take other steps to address late rent or repairs, unnecessarily imperils that. Landlords frequently pass the filing charges on to tenants. Combined with other fines and fees, this results in an average of \$180, which is 20% of housing costs for the average rental household. In addition to bringing Maryland's filing fees in line with the national average, this Bill would also prohibit landlords from passing those costs on to tenants.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 729.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stuart Pittman".

Stuart Pittman
County Executive