



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 17, 2021**

**HB 729**

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

**House Judiciary Committee**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public-policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch) dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

House Bill 729 would increase, from not more than \$18 to not less than \$120, the surcharge that the District Court is required to assess per civil case for summary ejectment, tenant holding over, and breach of lease that seeks a judgment for possession of residential property against a residential tenant; requiring the District Court to assess the surcharge against a landlord and prohibiting the court from awarding or assigning the surcharge against a residential tenant

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 109-204,000 Maryland households were at risk of eviction at the end of 2020.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, 41 percent of Maryland renter households, pre-pandemic, were cost-burdened, meaning they paid 35% or more of their income for housing costs. In FY 2019, there were 669,778 eviction cases filed in Maryland – that is 5 cases filed per cost-burdened household. The struggle to maintain a home in a crisis has become undeniable. Maryland needs a fairer “Failure to Pay Rent” eviction process, one that focuses on housing stability instead of housing loss.

Recently several bishop chairmen of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) wrote to all members of Congress addressing housing needs during the COVID-19 pandemic stating “Ensuring stable housing is essential, especially during a public health crisis. Emergency rental assistance that meets today’s historic need is crucial in order to avoid evictions for tens of millions of people...to keep people safely housed until they are able to access these services, it is necessary to strengthen and extend eviction and foreclosure moratoriums and establish a national utility shutoff moratorium.”

For this reason the Conference appreciates your consideration and urges a favorable report for House Bill 729.

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<sup>1</sup> Stout Risius Ross, LLC, Estimation of Households Experiencing Rental Shortfall and Potentially Facing Eviction, <http://bit.ly/stoutevictiondata> (select “Maryland” in drop-down menu).