

This outline is a rough timeline of my overall experience with The Courtyards during the 2020-2021 leasing period.

Me and a friend signed onto a lease by April 2020 and paid the initial deposit as it was the mandatory deadline for Fall 2020-Spring 2021 housing. Despite being at home during this period, we thought the pandemic shut-down would only be for that spring and that things would return to normal after the summer. As rising juniors, we did not want to risk having no housing options if campus did open for the Fall. Our schedules still had yet to be confirmed by this time and The Courtyards' lease contract also had no provisions pertaining to potential Covid-19 protocol while living there - thus we assumed things would return to normal by the time move-in day came.

It was much later that we understood the magnitude of this pandemic and the university only confirmed my final schedule details by early August (August 7th) - from which I was 100% online and realized I no longer needed on-campus housing.

Resident halls were releasing students from their financial responsibility towards housing and dining during this time. I thought MEDCO would be similar given the unique circumstances. So I requested to have my lease canceled ASAP, because

1. I was not interested in paying a whole-year's worth of rent for a room I would not inhabit.
2. Re-lease appointments and meetings are not held in the months of August, February, and March
3. I would likely not be able to find a re-lessor before classes start or after, given the pandemic circumstances

I was willing to pay a penalty fee for exiting my lease if that's what the conditions of cancellation required, but surprisingly, The Courtyards had no formal plan in-place for lease cancellation - even amid emergency pandemic circumstances. Instead they only emailed me resources to re-lease my room to another person as the only option to be relieved of paying for the room, in which, I would be entirely responsible for searching for a suitable re-leasing candidate - which again would not have been possible given the aforementioned circumstances.

Seeing how inflexible and unresponsive the representatives of Courtyards were to my concerns I joined Leonard Lucchi's legal group by August 28th and never moved-in to my room. I did continue to search for people to take over my lease, reaching out to all applicable candidates with the contacts of potential re-lessors as provided by Reslife UMD. However despite my emails and offer of monetary incentives for taking on my lease - I had no replies.

The negative experiences that I and others have gone through regarding this issue have completely diminished my trust in MEDCO housing. Since then, I have no longer opted for on-campus housing, lest I be trapped into another lease, and I have been commuting everyday for my senior year since. I do not wish for any other student to go through the fear, frustration, and anxiety that I have experienced from MEDCO's predatory leasing practices and sincerely hope that our unfortunate dilemmas can be used to facilitate positive, constructive changes to the housing system at The Courtyards and South Campus Commons.

Sincerely,
Elin Fan