

HB0881, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions
Testimony in **Support**

To: Chair Barve and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Arielle Juberg, Baltimore MD 21234

My name is Arielle Juberg. I am a resident of Baltimore County in District 8. I belong to Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) in Baltimore. SURJ is also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United Maryland. I am testifying in **support** of HB0881, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

HB0881 is important to me because our communities need stable housing options. I am a former tenant, and many of my friends rent in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. When a landlord refuses to renew a lease for no reason, tenants fall into the chaos of finding a new home in a very short time period. There is already a steep power imbalance between landlords and tenants. With our current policies, landlords can destabilize tenants' lives without a justifiable reason.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They have no choice but to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities.

In contrast to Maryland's present "no cause" policy is "just cause" policy where a landlord may choose not to renew an expiring lease *only if there is an acceptable basis for that decision*. A [2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab](#) found "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution." Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what's acceptable and when. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. The [National Equity Atlas](#), shares demographic statistics about rent debt sourced from US Census and Treasury data. *On January 30, they reported an estimated 105,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.* Of those, 74% of tenants are people of color. Crucially, 51% of those households include children, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown, and [social scientists have documented](#) declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction. People of color form less than half of this state's population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **support** HB0881. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service.