



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB932
Landlord and Tenant – Right to Redemption of Leased Premises – Form of Payment
Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart
February 22nd, 2022 • Environment and Transportation Committee

What the Bill Does

HB932 will close an important loophole in our housing law to ensure the success of Maryland's Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The bill would explicitly allow renters to pay landlords with an electronic or written check from a governmental entity — inclusive of payment from an agency providing rental assistance.

Why the Bill Is Important

During the COVID-19 pandemic, housing stability has given many Marylanders a sense of security amid all the panic and health fears. Luckily, the federal government — and in turn the state of Maryland — have implemented the Emergency Rental Assistance Program to ensure that tenants are able to pay their rent and stay in their properties. In Maryland, this program has seen massive success; so far, over 40,000 households have been assisted, totalling about \$250 million in aid. While this program got off to a slow start, **ERAP is now running smoothly throughout the state, processing more than 6,000 applications for more than \$30 million each month.**

However, a small number of landlords are claiming that, due to the current phrasing of Maryland law, they are not required to accept ERAP payments. The potential consequences of this refusal are not difficult to see; **tenants could be forced out of their homes even if they are able to pay rent.** This issue must be eliminated immediately. The security of low-income renters and success of rental assistance programs rely on the legitimacy of this aid as a form of payment.

Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably

If tenants have the ability to pay rent, whether that be through their own income or government assistance, landlords must be required to accept the payment. Failing to close this loophole would put the government's support behind landlords who wish to evict their tenants without cause and potentially render millions of dollars of ERAP aid unusable.

No Marylander should be forced out of their home due to a ridiculous legal loophole. I urge a favorable report.