



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB674
Landlord and Tenant – Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental Assistance Determination
Testimony by Delegate Vaughn Stewart
February 22nd, 2022 • Environment and Transportation Committee

What the Bill Does

HB674 will offer an important protection for tenants trying in good faith to pay for their rental unit. The bill requires judges to pause an eviction proceeding when there's been a good-faith application for rental assistance.

Why the Bill Is Important

This bill is important for two reasons. First, it's immoral to kick them out of their home when there is money available to keep them in it. We shouldn't be evicting people simply because county governments are too often understaffed. The federal government has sent Maryland nearly \$1 billion, and it has been wildly successful—over 40,000 households have been assisted so far. When we have enough federal dollars to pay off the entirety of the state's rental debt, we should be exploring every avenue to allocate that money to where it's needed.

Second, this bill will improve the administration of the rental assistance program. If tenants can secure an eviction stay, they will be more motivated to apply. Tenant advocates will be galvanized to increase the number of applications. Crucially, landlords will be encouraged to apply early on in the process rather than risking the tenant applying once they get to court.

Why the Committee Should Vote Favorably

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program helps both renters and landlords; renters get to stay in their homes while landlords get paid. There's no reason to prematurely force a tenant out of their home simply because the bureaucracy of a mutually-beneficial program is providing a slight delay to rent payment. We should strive to keep Marylanders in their homes whenever possible. As a measure to limit homelessness and pay landlords, this bill is a no-brainer.

Marylanders should not be forced out of their homes when there is money available to make their landlords whole. I urge a favorable report.