



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

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COUNCILMEMBER
AT-LARGE

Councilmember Jawando Testimony supporting HB 881

My name is Will Jawando and I am an At-Large County Councilmember in Montgomery County. I am writing to share testimony in support of HB 881, Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

Stable housing is one of the most essential assets of human life; lack of stable housing has been shown to drastically worsen mental health. Evictions, temporary housing situations, and poor housing conditions have been shown to lead to or reinforce issues with depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems. Studies have shown that moving three or more times in a year, often called “multiple moves,” has been associated with negative health outcomes in children. Children who move frequently are more likely to have chronic conditions and poor physical health. A key element to improving mental health for those in precarious housing and those experiencing homelessness is the provision of affordable, safe, stable, and permanent housing.

According to a Montgomery County OLO Report, local data on three metrics of housing insecurity - rent-burdened households, rental assistance during the pandemic, and homelessness - demonstrate that Black and Latinx households in Montgomery County are especially housing insecure. Specifically:

- Among renter households in 2019, rent burden (expending 30 percent or more of income on rent) was experienced among 66 percent of Latinx renters and 60 percent of Black renters compared to 40 percent of White renters and 33 percent of Asian renters.
- Among COVID Relief Rental Program clients (approved as of April 4, 2021), 43 percent were Black and 37 percent were Latinx while 9 percent were White and 3 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander.
- Among single adults experiencing homelessness in 2020, 60 percent were Black, 30 percent were White, 17 percent were Latinx, and 5 percent were Asian and Pacific Islanders.
- Among families experiencing homelessness in 2020, 78 percent were Black, 15 percent were White, 9 percent were Latinx, and 2 percent were Asian.
- Data on homeownership also demonstrates housing inequities by race and ethnicity where 75 percent of White and Asian households in Montgomery County resided in owner-occupied units in 2019 compared to 50 percent of Latinx and Native American households and 42 percent of Black households.

Recently, there have been discussions about the increase in tenant holdover cases in Montgomery County. This started before the Courts put the recent hold on Failure to Pay Rent cases, but it is accelerating. While there may be several reasons for this, one may be that some landlords are trying to get around the rent stabilization that is currently in place, especially in apartments where the turnover rent to a new tenant would be much higher than a renewal rent to the current tenant.

Another concern that was voiced was about tenant holdovers for tenants with good records of paying rent - not just cases where a tenant might have a record of late rent and so tenant holdover is a way for the landlord to remove the tenant (which are also increasing). We also received reports from Legal Aid stating they are seeing a trend in landlords increasing their requirements for income compared to rent; in some cases, they are seeing

requests for incomes of four times the rent. There are issues of income discrimination as they have seen landlords require this from people with Housing Choice Vouchers. The reality is that many households just don't earn four times the rent.

HB 881 addresses the issues of housing discrimination against people of color and low-income individuals. As we continue to work through COVID relief, having a stable home should not be an issue that our residents are faced with. Vote in favor of HB 881, for the good of all our Maryland children and families.

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