

House Bill 881
Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 22, 2022

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports HB 881, which authorizes jurisdiction in Maryland to adopt local laws and ordinances that prohibit landlords of residential properties from non-renewing a lease without having a just cause.

Inspired by the gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth, individuals, and families each year, we see the traumatic impact of eviction and housing displacement every day. Homelessness and housing instability are public health crises, and the failure of Maryland’s safety net systems to assist struggling low-income renters has only been exacerbated by the pandemic. COVID-19 has laid to bare longstanding inequities in our systems, including inequitable eviction processes. We support HB 881, and the examples below outline how we see this legislation benefiting those we serve.

HB 881 will reduce the incidence of homelessness by allowing Maryland jurisdictions to pass policies that ensure tenants don’t experience lease non-renewals without a just cause. We provide homeless services across central and western Maryland, and often those we work with tell us their households spiraled into homelessness due to an eviction or a loss of stable housing. Stable housing is a cornerstone of stable families, and studies show that just cause eviction ordinances have a significant impact on lowering eviction rates and filings.ⁱ Families shouldn’t lose their housing – especially in an ongoing pandemic – when their lease ends without just cause provided for non-renewal.

HB 881 will assist in the social and economic recovery from COVID. Without stable shelter, families are more susceptible to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), hunger, behavioral health crises, and poor health. These past two years in our head start programs our caseworkers have talked to hundreds of parents that have told us they are at risk of losing their housing and are looking for assistance. The pandemic has demonstrated the gaping holes in our safety net programs, especially for people of color. Allowing local governments to pass their own just cause ordinances can improve the socioeconomic outlook of low-income families at risk of losing their housing.

HB 881 is sound fiscal policy. Loss of housing entrench families into homelessness, poverty, and ACEs, which are extraordinarily expensive to address. Maryland should be working to prevent loss of housing, especially among households with children. Safe and reliable housing provides the stability needed to secure and maintain employment, promote good health, invest in educational opportunities and ultimately saves the state resources that otherwise go to maintain shelters and state-funded safety net programs. We know our individuals and families thrive in economically secure households with stable housing, and thriving families means a thriving economy.

On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 881.

Submitted By: Lisa Klingenmaier, Assistant Director of Advocacy

ⁱ Cueller, Juileta. 2019. *Effect of “Just Cause” Eviction Ordinances on Eviction in Four California Cities*. Journal of Public & International Affairs. <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>