



TESTIMONY FOR HB0323

Real Property - Limitations on Summoning Law Enforcement or Emergency Services - Prohibition

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Palakovich-Carr

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0323 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members understand and appreciate that first responder units are stretched pretty thin. They don't have the bandwidth to service repeat calls from the same property. So, local governments have tried to protect their first responders by enacting laws to fine landlords and property owners for repeated calls from their property.

This has had the effect of serving as a deterrent for residents to call the police during an emergency for fear of reprisal by their landlord because landlords will usually evict the tenant after the first call for service, even if the tenant was the victim of a crime. This is not the desired outcome, if people are afraid to call for help in an emergency for fear of being evicted. Victims of domestic violence, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities are especially at risk in these situations.

This bill would preclude landlords from putting language in rental agreements that preclude residents from calling the police or other first responders. It also precludes the landlord from taking action against the tenant.

The bill also restricts the local government from setting a threshold number of requests that can come from a single property as being a 'nuisance' and penalizes the owner or the tenant from making too many calls.

Local governments and landlords should not be able to allow a disaster to happen, or lives to be lost, because they discouraged people from reaching out for help.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.