



Senate Bill 592

Landlord and Tenant – Right to Redemption of Leased Premises – Form of Payment

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 22, 2022

From: D'Paul Nibber

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 592. This bill would require landlords to accept electronic or written checks issued by counties assisting tenants as they exercise their right to redeem during an eviction proceeding.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and its associated economic effects, the potential for tenant evictions has threatened to compound our communities' difficulties. To stabilize the housing market, counties have been relied upon to distribute federal emergency rental assistance to qualified tenants experiencing financial distress. County agencies have worked diligently to ensure this assistance is provided in a timely manner. A total of over 70,000 applications for rental assistance have been processed with over 40,000 households having received assistance.

Unfortunately, state and federal guidelines regarding payment distribution record-keeping, evidence of rental arrangements, and collection of qualifying income documentation contributed to recent delays in assistance payments. In recent months, counties have increased the efficiency and timeliness of their emergency rental assistance programs, yet eviction filings concerning tenants eligible for assistance persist.

County officials share the concern that landlords are not accepting emergency rental assistance payments made on behalf of tenants, with form of payment and the potential conditions attached being significant obstacles. SB 592 is needed to ensure housing stability for these vulnerable tenants. Upon eviction, these former tenants are faced with cascading negative health and economic issues including homelessness, food insecurity, and job loss—placing a substantial burden on state and county resources.

SB 592 would protect vulnerable Marylanders from needless evictions and by doing so, avoid the preventable drain on state and local resources. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 592 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.