



Peter Franchot
Comptroller

TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

Support – Senate Bill 223 – Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Actions - Filing Surcharge and Prohibited Lease Provisions

Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 3, 2022

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in **support** of **Senate Bill 223 – Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Actions - Filing Surcharge and Prohibited Lease Provisions**. I would like to thank Senate President Ferguson for sponsoring this important legislation on behalf of Attorney General Frosh, and the Committee for providing the opportunity for my testimony to be heard.

Housing affordability is an ongoing issue in Maryland, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made keeping families in their homes more important than ever before. Too frequently, some landlords elect to file eviction proceedings prematurely, in part because filing fees in Maryland are nearly the lowest in the nation. While other states may charge hundreds, the current filing surcharge is as low as fifteen dollars. This incentivizes landlords to simply file for eviction due to the low cost, which they are allowed to pass on to tenants.

Senate Bill 223 would increase the maximum eviction filing fee for landlords to a maximum of 73 dollars, still well below the national average, and ensure that those costs could not be passed on to tenants.

These reasonable measures will work to reduce the number of eviction filings and help fund legal services for vulnerable tenants, all serving to protect tenants and keep Maryland families in their homes.

For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 223. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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