



Senate Bill 816

Committee: Judicial Proceedings
Date: March 2, 2022
Position: Favorable with Amendments

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities. Our members house over 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 816 (“SB 816”) requires housing providers to provide an animal shelter “fact sheet” to every resident that receives an eviction notice, regardless of whether the resident has a pet. Further, housing providers must provide the fact sheet to residents with pets at the time of lease signing. The fact sheet must also be provided with the summons for unlawful detainer cases, commonly referred to as “squatter” cases. MMHA appreciates the intent of SB 816, but MMHA is concerned by the significant practical issues and regulatory requirements established within the bill.

MMHA is concerned that SB 816 will result in negative, unintended consequences. For example, residents currently receive a significant amount of information during the eviction process. Just last year, the Maryland General Assembly codified a new notice bill into law. SB 816 requires yet another piece of paper be provided to residents during the notice process, which may result in confusion or missed information. **As a result, residents may not be aware of the separate eviction notice that includes important information, like the court date or information on how to avoid the eviction.**

On page 4, lines 1-3, the bill requires the fact sheet to be provided with every notice, regardless of whether a resident has a pet. On page 3, lines 27-29, the bill requires the fact sheet to be provided in unlawful detainer cases, which are commonly referred to as “squatter” cases. Based on the language in SB 816, MMHA is unsure of whether residents without pets and squatters who have no right to the property could make technical challenges in court by claiming that they did not receive the fact sheet.

Since residents receive multiple notices during the eviction process, MMHA’s experience is that animals left in properties are intentionally abandoned by the owner. **However, SB 816 establishes no requirements or accountability for individuals that abandon their pets when they leave a property.** With no accountability for an owner that abandons the pet and knowledge that a rescue organization will contact the owner in the future to attempt to return the pet, MMHA is concerned that SB 816 may unintentionally incentivize more residents to leave their pets during the eviction process.

MMHA appreciates the intent of SB 816, but MMHA is concerned with the significant practical issues and regulatory requirements established in the bill. To address concerns regarding additional information that may confuse residents or obfuscate eviction information, **MMHA respectfully requests that language beginning on page 3, line 16 be stricken down through page 4, line 3. For the aforementioned reasons, MMHA respectfully requests adoption of the amendment.**