

Robin Carter  
Chairperson, Board of Commissioners

Janet Abrahams  
President | Chief Executive Officer



HB 841

February 28, 2023

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Janet Abrahams, Chief Executive Officer

RE: House Bill 841 – Real Property -Nuisance Actions – Rodent Harborage

POSITION: Oppose

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that Housing Authority of Baltimore City opposes House Bill 841.

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) was established to provide federally funded public housing programs and related services for Baltimore's low-income residents. The proposed law would have a major financial impact on HABC as the bill is too broad and overreaching in several ways.

HABC is a property owner that rents all of its properties to tenants. First, the proposed law provides no requirements for notice and opportunity to cure before a property owner is sued. Tenants are required to notify HABC of needed repairs, but do not always do so. Further, tenants sometimes create housekeeping conditions that promote pests. Some tenants refuse to cooperate with HABC's pest eradication efforts even though it is a material lease provision, and HABC must go through a judicial process such as a breach of lease action or injunctive relief to gain access to perform repairs in some instances. Further, HABC also experiences unauthorized occupancy and squatters in some units, who contribute to these conditions, and must also go through a judicial process to regain possession of their unit in many instances. In some situations, a source of the problem in a HABC-unit may not even be a property owned by HABC unit, and a property-owner such as HABC can be sued, before it has had notice of the issue and an opportunity to get to the source to have the matter addressed by the source.

Although the objective of the law is not unreasonable, the law as presently written is not clearly defined, especially as to lack of notice, standing to file action and what damages can be reasonably claimed and in what amounts. It has the potential to bring about lawsuits that are based on spurious grounds and without notice, which will have a financial impact on HABC in the defense of such suits.

We respectfully request an unfavorable report on House Bill 841.

Respectfully submitted:

Janet Abrahams, HABC President & CEO

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