



**House Bill 691 – Landlord and Tenant – Failure to Repair Serious and Dangerous Defects – Tenant Remedies (Tenant Safety Act)**

**Position: Unfavorable**

Maryland REALTORS® oppose HB 691 which, among other provisions, allows for money damages under the rent escrow law.

REALTORS® often manage property for owners who lease their single-family property for many reasons. Sometimes it is because the owner is seeking to create additional income for their family by holding onto property they once lived in. Sometimes, they choose rental real estate as a separate investment vehicle where the rent helps pay the mortgage allowing landlords to build equity in the property. Sometimes, it is because the owner of the property has a job relocation but wants to return to Maryland.

Regardless of the reason, not all landlords are large corporations. In fact, many times, their rent barely covers the cost of their mortgage and maintenance costs. Their payoff is not the yearly rent income, but the equity that builds in the property over many years.

HB 691 poses a significant challenge for these landlords by allowing a tenant to use the rent escrow law to sue for money damages. The purpose of the law is to provide tenants with a tool to force landlords to repair serious and dangerous defects rather than simply making a landlord pay damages that do nothing to improve living conditions in the dwelling unit.

Furthermore, the bill establishes the right for landlords to be sued by tenant organizations which will ensure even more money is spent in legal proceedings rather than in fixing properties and bringing them to up to code.

For this reason, the Maryland REALTORS® recommend an unfavorable report.

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