

Dear Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of **District 41**. **I am testifying in support of House Bill HB0684, the “Just Cause Evictions Bill.”**



HB 684 allows local jurisdictions to require a just basis for landlords to either refuse to renew or to cut off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, limiting how and when lease non-renewals occur, requiring landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or requiring landlords to prove a just cause in court.

In contrast to Maryland’s present “no cause” policy is “just cause” policy where a landlord may choose not to renew an expiring lease *only if there is an acceptable basis for that decision*. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.” Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what’s acceptable and when. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

A disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown, and [social scientists have documented](#) declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction. People of color form less than half of this state's population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **vote in support of HB0684**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sarah Johnson
1 Merryman Court
Baltimore, MD 21210
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

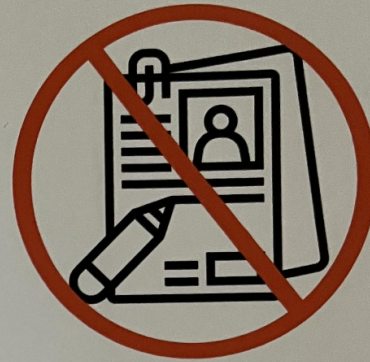
Local Enabling Legislation for Just Cause Eviction

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins
reference HB881 in 2022

When it comes to lease non-renewals, Maryland is a "no cause" state - that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew without any stated cause. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules, and must accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities.

This legislation enables Maryland counties to pass local "just cause" policies for lease non-renewals. "Just cause" means that a landlord may choose not to renew an expiring lease only if there is an acceptable basis for that decision. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what's acceptable and when.

Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to their local efforts to stabilize rental housing through just cause policies.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, as court delays and emergency rental assistance slowed the pace of non-payment eviction filings, evictions based on lease non-renewal roughly doubled.

With more tenants organizing and demanding repair and safe, healthy living conditions, landlords have retaliated with unjust and discriminatory lease non-renewals.

Requiring just cause as a precondition for an eviction is a limited requirement which boosts the stability of the market by stabilizing families, neighborhoods, and communities to ensure that no one is arbitrarily deprived of their home.

Cities such as Oakland, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia have adopted just cause eviction policies. This legislation recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

Renters United Maryland is a coalition of advocates, organizers, policymakers and renters. To learn more about our work on these priorities and other legislation, visit www.rentersunitedmaryland.org

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