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My name is Tino Fragale, and I am co-director of Everyday Canvassing, a Maryland-based nonprofit that knocks doors to ask “what you like about where you live, and what would you like to see change?” I've overseen door knocking at nearly 50,000 renter's doors and built strong relationships with community members who live in properties neglected by management. Many of the renters we know fear being kicked out of their homes if they report their apartment conditions or work with neighbors towards a healthier, safer, and more comfortable community. For that reason, I ask that you support Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

Typically, management contractually covers maintenance. In most cases, apartments advertise this as a perk of paying them to live in their building. But when management goes months without fulfilling their contracted maintenance, this becomes a burden to community members who are at risk of being sued or evicted for doing something as simple as changing their light fixtures, filling rodent holes behind their stoves, or putting new locks on their doors. In part, this is why we have government agencies tasked to inspect and collect reports on apartments. However, in Maryland, apartment improvement efforts are hampered by the fact that you can be thrown out for reporting contract negligence by management. Reporting violations to the government and organizing with your neighbors are risky moves that can result in you losing the only place you call home and can afford.

Many community members are keenly aware of the risks of reporting housing violations. A family I met at the Enclave apartments in Silver Spring, MD has been facing bathroom flooding for months that is leaking into the building's communal hallway and damaging electrical circuitry in their apartment. Another family at the same building noticed the elevators in the 19 floor building were all out of date for

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their Maryland state inspections. This was particularly concerning when there was a fire on a lower floor that momentarily trapped residents who could not use the stairs. Both of these families insisted that they could not share their complaints publicly because they could move nowhere else if their lease was not renewed for speaking out.

As is the case with these two families, the threat of retaliation means that our community is often stuck with degrading homes that they are prohibited from fixing themselves. And we are afraid to speak out to government agencies or social services for help, leaving us without the support we need to improve our living conditions. Just Cause is a law that protects our right to free speech and peaceful assembly, allowing us to speak up and gather without fear of retaliation. By providing these protections, renters are empowered to advocate for necessary improvements to their homes and communities, which will ultimately lead to a better quality of life for hundreds of thousands of renter households in Maryland¹.

¹ (There were approximately 972,000 renter-occupied households in 2020 | Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MDMarylanders>)