



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB481
Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024
Senate - Judicial Proceedings Committee
Jose Coronado-Flores , On Behalf of CASA

February 29th, 2024

Dear Honorable Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

CASA is pleased to offer favorable testimony in support of **SB481**.

SB481 is important legislation that will standardize renter's rights, stabilize security deposits, and prevent evictions during extreme weather events. CASA's services and advocacy includes tenant organizing. Throughout the state, there are apartment communities where tenants suffer deplorable conditions, transgressions of personal privacy, and unjust treatment by property owners and managers. People fighting for dignified housing and treatment occurs from Montgomery County to Baltimore City, and many other jurisdictions in the state. However, the "rights" they have as tenants varies from county to county.

For example, Montgomery County has a strong tenant-landlord handbook that outlines the things tenants are entitled to when entering a lease as well as what a landlord can demand from a tenant. This is a powerful tool that outlines notification requirements to enter dwellings and rights that tenant associations hold. Hence, fighting an unjust entry into a dwelling would be easier in Montgomery County compared to other places. This is not just a hypothetical as we see how tenant advocacy varies from county to county. Creating a unified set of renter's rights that are valid across the state will reduce ambiguity and increase confidence among renters to demand what is right.

Furthermore, the Renter's Rights and Stabilization Act limits security deposits to one month rent, which lowers the cost of entry to housing for MD's lower-income residents; this is the difference between someone being able to sign a lease or having to delay to accumulate the required funds. Our members live check to check, so having more than two months rent can seem like an insurmountable barrier. Lastly, CASA supports that this legislation directs funds to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation, a partner in our access to counsel work, which helps provide legal representation for renters.

For these reasons, CASA urges a favorable report.

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