



**SB 162 - Landlord and Tenant - Termination of Residential Lease - Limitation of Liability for Rent
Environment and Transportation Committee**

March 19, 2024

SUPPORT

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 162. This bill will provide financial protection to individuals who are no longer able to remain in their rental property due to an intellectual or developmental disability or mental disorder.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

SB 162 will ensure that a tenant who has vacated the property is not liable for more than two months' rent if they have a completed form from a psychologist, physician, counselor or therapist which states that they have a mental disorder or intellectual or developmental disability. Mental disorders, developmental disabilities and poverty are linked. According to a United Way 2022 report, **55% of Marylanders with a cognitive disability experience financial hardship**.¹ This same report also found that over 30% of people with a disability in Maryland are renters. It is imperative that Marylanders with mental health disorders and intellectual or developmental disabilities are protected from the financial strain of paying more than two months' rent after leaving a property that is not suited for their needs, especially when a high percentage are already living in poverty.

30,000 people experience homelessness in Maryland every year,² and at least 25% of people experiencing homelessness have a severe mental health disorder.³ Intellectual or developmental disabilities and mental disorders contribute to an individual's ability to stay housed. When a person with a cognitive disability or mental disorder is forced to pay more than two months' rent to vacate a property, that can significantly impact their ability to pay for a new place to live, which adds to the homelessness crisis. SB 162 will provide greater protection and support to vulnerable Marylanders and will ensure more individuals and families are in housing situations that provide for their needs.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 162.

¹ United Way: <https://unitedwayna.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ALICE-in-Focus-Disabilities-Maryland.pdf>

² Health Care for the Homeless: <https://www.hchmd.org/homelessness-maryland>

³ Health Care for the Homeless: <https://www.hchmd.org/homelessness-makes-you-sick>