

Marylanders Need Stronger Renter's Rights

Position Statement Supporting House Bill 1114

Given before the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Marylanders who experience an eviction also often face the additional setback of losing most of their belongings in the process, from furniture to medications and treasured family mementos, in part because they often don't know the actual date they are removed from their home. **The Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports HB 1114**, which seeks to assist Maryland's most vulnerable renters by ensuring that tenants have notice of their impending eviction date and a limited period of time to reclaim their personal possessions in case an eviction is executed.

Renters need and deserve reliable notice of the eviction date so that they can exercise their statutory right of redemption ("pay to stay") or make plans to leave the property with their belongings intact. Equally, Maryland renters deserve a reclamation period after the eviction occurs, to mitigate the financial and personal loss that evictions cause – as most renters in the country already have. A "reclamation period" is a period post-eviction in which a renter can still gain access to their possessions such as life-saving medicine, electronics, and personal treasures such as photos, mementos, and heirlooms.

HB1114 would provide tenants notice 14 days in advance of their impending eviction dates and provide tenants the opportunity to reclaim whatever personal possessions are on the property for 10 days after the eviction occurs. This is a sensible bill that brings Maryland in line with the rest of the country on executing evictions.

Washington D.C., New Jersey, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia all require that the tenant be given notice of their eviction date and the opportunity to reclaim their personal possessions after their eviction. Moreover, nineteen states and D.C. require the tenant be given notice of their eviction date, the opportunity to reclaim their personal possessions, and require the landlord to perform some duty to store the tenant's possessions during the time of holding. An additional nine states require the tenant be given notice of their eviction date and the opportunity to reclaim their possessions.

HB 1114 is also beneficial to neighborhoods in that it no longer allows for an evicted tenant's belonging to be thrown out on public streets. Currently, in most of Maryland, a tenant's personal belongings are thrown into the street after an eviction, creating clutter that blocks sidewalks and creates public blight. HB 1114 remedies this issue by requiring the landlord to discard any remaining items in a proper and clean fashion.

Additionally, many jurisdictions currently require landlords to have a specific number of workers, equipment, and resources at the ready to conduct an eviction. Not only is this costly to the landlord, but in the event an eviction is redeemed, cancelled, or postponed, the landlord loses money and resources. Instituting a reclamation period after an executed eviction means that landlords will no longer have to hire five or more workers to be present at each

eviction. The landlord will now have more flexibility after the end of the 10-day period to dispose of any remaining belongings.

HB 1114 is a critical protection during a time when too many Marylanders are at risk of facing eviction. According to the Maryland Housing Needs Assessment, nearly one-third of all Maryland households are experiencing housing cost burdens.ⁱ Of these, 67% are homeowners while 33% are renters. Among renters, 48% of those households are cost burdened, and among low-income households, 76% are severely cost-burdened.

Contributing to the inflated housing cost is the fact that Maryland is experiencing a housing shortage of 96,000 units and this number is expected to grow. The latest Out of Reach report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition lists Maryland as the ninth least affordable state for renters.ⁱⁱ To afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in the state, a family must earn \$28.93 an hour or \$60,183 annually. A minimum wage worker in Maryland would have to work 78 hours per week year-round.

While policies to increase affordable housing and prevent evictions are important, reducing the level of financial setback that comes along with an eviction by providing tenants more opportunity to retrieve their belongings could help families bounce back more quickly following an eviction.

If we want to close disparities between white, Black and Brown Marylanders, we must begin with housing. HB 1114 is a step in the right direction because the eviction process should be humane for all Marylanders. For these reasons, **the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests the House Environment and Transportation Committee to make a favorable report on House Bill 1114.**

Equity Impact Analysis: House Bill 1114

Bill Summary

House Bill 1114 ensures that tenants have notice of their impending eviction date and a limited period of time to reclaim their personal possessions in case an eviction is executed.

Background

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Maryland is experiencing a housing shortage of 96,000 units and this number is expected to grow. The latest Out of Reach report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition lists Maryland as the ninth least affordable state for renters.ⁱⁱⁱ To afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in the state, a family must earn \$28.93 an hour or \$60,183 annually. A minimum wage worker in Maryland would have to work 78 hours per week year-round. When families struggle to pay rent, they face greater risks of instability, eviction, and even homelessness,

which research links to food insecurity, poor health, lower cognitive scores and academic achievement, and more frequent foster care placement among children. Seniors and people with disabilities, on fixed incomes, cannot live safely without affordable housing and supportive services.

Equity Implications

Unaffordable and unstable housing perpetuates racial and economic and health disparities in our state. If we want to close disparities between white and black and brown Marylanders, we must begin with housing. We must also ensure that renters are not being subjected to unfair and eviction practices. Because Black and Brown people are more likely to be renters, they often feel the brunt of both the good and bad rental policies such as repeated eviction filings, increase security deposits and substandard housing living conditions.

Ensuring that people do not lose all of their possessions in the event an eviction is executed will benefit low-income renters who are most at risk of experiencing an eviction.

Impact

HB 1114 will likely **improve racial, health and economic equity** in Maryland.

ⁱ Maryland 10 Year Housing Assessment <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Documents/Other%20Publications/Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ National Low Income Housing Coalition <https://nlihc.org/oor/state/md>

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