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Testimony on Senate Bill 481
Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024
House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1800 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We urge you to support Senate Bill 481 and approve Governor Moore's proposed Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024 to expand protections and resources available to Maryland tenants.

Senate Bill 481 will:

- 1) establish an Office of Tenant Rights in the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide renters with information about their rights under the law and creating a Tenant's Bill of Rights;
- 2) address the highest eviction filing rate in the nation by increasing the eviction filing fee and preventing it from being passed on to renters;
- 3) create new dedicating funding for the Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program and the Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund;
- 4) reduce the allowable security deposit from two months rent to one month;
- 5) create a statewide 'right of first refusal', allowing renters the right to purchase their home if being sold; and
- 6) modify the state's new rental voucher program to prioritize vouchers for families with children under the age of five and for pregnant women.

Maryland Nonprofits' broad membership includes organizations serving the entire spectrum of individual, family and community needs across our state. This perspective allows us to see better than most that resolving poverty and the social and economic inequities that burden the lives of too many Marylanders, particularly families and communities of color, requires addressing the multiple interconnected challenges that they face every day. Factors such as lack of available transportation, food insecurity, unaffordable childcare, and access to adequate health care and services, all impact the health and education of children, the opportunity to access to jobs and stable employment, the ability to build a sustaining level of wealth, and more. **Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is essential to meeting most if not all of these needs.**



Maryland Nonprofits' mission is to strengthen organizations and networks for greater quality of life and equity.

Housing instability is a serious problem for low- and moderate-income renters. Maryland saw well over 18,000 evictions last year. Even when tenants are willing to sacrifice to pay rent increases, they are still subject to non-renewal if the landlord desires to find higher income tenants (to pay even higher rents), or to remove a tenant 'too demanding' of services that are the landlord's responsibility.

While Senate Bill 481 does not resolve all issues facing tenants in Maryland, and we will continue to support much needed increases in eviction prevention funding and services, measures like the creation of a statewide 'right of first refusal' for tenants and the others in the Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024 are substantial steps forward.

We urge you to give Senate Bill 481 a **favorable report**.