



March 7, 2024

SB 946

**Landlord and Tenant - Failure to Repair Serious and Dangerous Defects - Tenant Remedies
(Tenant Safety Act of 2024)**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 946. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 946 requires landlords to warrant that their rental units are fit for human habitation. It obligates landlords to repair and eliminate conditions and defects which constitute a fire hazard or a serious and substantial threat to the life, health, or safety of occupants, including but not limited to dangerous mold. If a landlord refuses to remedy these situations, this legislation allows tenants to hold rent in escrow. They may do so individually or in a class of renters. Landlords who fail to make repairs will face significant financial penalties. This bill passed the house in 2023 and has been revised to address concerns raised in the senate.

Senate Bill 946 is a very reasonable measure to ensure protection against inhabitable living conditions. Catholic teaching supports the right to private property but recognizes that communities and government have an obligation to ensure that housing needs of all are met, especially the poor and vulnerable members of our communities. Access to safe and affordable housing is a fundamental human right and this legislation represents a positive step toward achieving this goal.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 946.