

February 27, 2024

William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: In support of SB0481 Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

Dear Honorable Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Community Assistance Network, Inc.(CAN), the designated nonprofit anti-poverty Community Action Agency serving Baltimore County offers our strong support for Senate Bill 481, the Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024. We thank Governor Wes Moore and the Department of Housing and Community Development for yet another piece of forward-thinking legislation to address the housing issues our economically challenged renter clients incur in the community we serve. CAN fields thousands of calls for eviction protection counseling and emergency financial assistance every year. In 2023 we helped 596 families avoid eviction throughout Baltimore County.

This crucial piece of legislation addresses key issues related to renters' rights and housing stability in our state. The proposed increase in the surcharge (from \$8 to \$93) for certain eviction proceedings demonstrates a commitment to funding essential renter protection programs and the Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

The establishment of the Office of Tenants' Rights (OTR) within DHCD is a significant step towards ensuring that tenants have a dedicated entity advocating for their rights and providing support in navigating the complexities of the rental system.

Additionally, the bill's provisions to extend the period between granting judgment for possession and the execution of the warrant of restitution demonstrate a balanced and humane approach to eviction proceedings. Furthermore, the establishment of a tenant's right of first refusal during property transfers and the expansion of eviction data collection contribute to a more equitable and transparent rental landscape.

Finally, our experience tells us that limiting the maximum required security deposit required by a residential lease to one months rent would significantly assist renters who are looking to move "down" to a more affordable unit as well as the unhoused families we serve to afford their goal of independent living.

As service providers to economically challenged renter households in our state CAN believes that SB481 aligns with our shared values of promoting fair and stable housing conditions for all Maryland residents. The comprehensive nature of this legislation, addressing both immediate challenges and long-term solutions, showcases a commitment to creating a more just and supportive housing environment.

We urge you to support SB481 for the betterment of Maryland's communities and the individuals and families who call our state home. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and we appreciate the state's ongoing efforts to enhance housing rights and stability.

For the foregoing reasons, we ask for your FAVORABLE report for SB481.

Sincerely,



Mitchell Posner
Executive Director