

2/16/2024

Andrew J. Miller  
Baltimore, MD 21209

**TESTIMONY ON SB0644**  
**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover  
Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Andrew J. Miller

**My name is Andrew Miller. I am a resident of District 11. I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0644.** I am chair of the Social Justice Advocacy Committee at Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Stevenson, MD; a member of the Baltimore Leadership Council of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ); and co-chair of the Synagogue Social Justice Roundtable which has representatives from 13 synagogue communities in Baltimore and Columbia. For me it is a religious obligation to speak out in favor of measures to remedy injustice in our state.

Every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe and stable home. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, “When a family is evicted, family members are often plunged into a downward spiral that may have long and devastating consequences... Children may have to switch schools, personal belongings can be lost ... Research has shown that mental health is also impacted. Low-income women, especially women of color, victims of domestic violence and families with children face a higher risk of eviction.”

According to the Maryland Emergency Rental Assistance Coalition, “in 2023 more than 100,000 Maryland renter households continued to struggle with lingering rent debt in the wake of the pandemic, and families with dependent children made up more than 90% of those households “very likely” to be evicted due to outstanding rent debts.” The Eviction Study analyzed data for Baltimore and showed that the number of Black evictions was 3 times higher than for white renters and the number of Black female-headed household removals was almost 4 times higher than for white male-headed evictions.

Landlords often retaliate against tenants who organize for their rights, demand that repairs be made, or complain about violations of law about safe housing conditions. Sometimes this takes the form of refusing to renew leases. Without a “Just Cause” law as specified in SB0644, tenants are not protected from this kind of retaliation. This bill would allow counties to adopt “just cause” laws to meet local needs by requiring landlords to renew residential leases unless they have a “just cause” to terminate the lease e.g. occupying the property themselves, having a close relative move in, taking the property off the market, or tenant breach of lease.

For these reasons I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.