



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Chairman William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for Senate Bill 644 - Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provision, a statewide enabling bill authorizing a county, including Baltimore City, to adopt by local law or ordinance provisions prohibiting a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease period or from terminating a holdover tenancy without just cause. **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

For Black residents in Maryland, this bill will provide much-needed relief. Black renters in Maryland are more likely to be evicted for non-payment of rent compared to their white counterparts. In Baltimore City, specifically, Black renters have the highest eviction count out of all racial and ethnic groups, at a rate of 5.9%, compared to 5.2% for white renters.

The racial disparity in evictions leads to Black Maryland residents experiencing higher rates of student transiency, unemployment, and homelessness, along with other negative impacts. The current rental system in Maryland gives landlords unchecked power to evict tenants from their homes within 60 days for no reason. Eviction for Black residents in Maryland is more worrisome, as racial discrimination in the rental market poses a great barrier to leasing a property in the first place.

Senate Bill 644 will protect Black renters from unjust eviction while allowing localities to enact county legislation under state law. This legislation allows all jurisdictions to determine their own Just Cause stipulations. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports Senate Bill 644 and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland