



Odette Ramos

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Testimony

**SB0481 – Renters’ Rights and Stabilization Act
Support with Amendments
February 28, 2024**

Honorable Chair Smith and Distinguished Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to urge your support of SB0481, Renters’ Rights and Stabilization Act with amendments.

Specifically, the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase or Right of First Refusal portion of the bill. Baltimore recently passed an updated version of our Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, and I named it after my predecessor Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke.

When Councilwoman Clarke was president of the City Council in the late 1980s, she introduced the nation’s first Right of First Refusal act. This was designed to ensure that renters in single family homes would be able to purchase the home they have been living in as renters when the owner was ready to sell. Owners of the buildings could no longer just sell the home out from under the renter. As a matter of fact, I bought my first home in Baltimore City in 1997 using this program.

In the rare event that Councilwoman Clarke was not in office, leadership at that time watered down the bill to a point where it was not effective. In 2023, we passed the Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act to honor my predecessor’s legacy, but also do something to ensure that renters can more easily become homeowners.

In the Mary Park Clarke Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, before an owner of a single-family rental can put the home on the market, they have to approach the tenant and offer the home for sale. There is a negotiation period and a period where the renter has to send in their intent to purchase the property. If they cannot at that time, the owner can put the property on the market. If a contract that the landlord is considering is 10% less – or more than that – they landlord has to go back to the tenant and offer that new amount. Our bill passed unanimously in our City Council, and I want to thank my colleagues for their support.

SB0481 has many similarities to our bill. It would assist renters to stay in their homes and have an opportunity to for homeownership.

Respectfully Submitted:

Odette Ramos
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