



SB0644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

**Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,
Feb. 16, 2023 at 10 am**

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is part of Renters United Maryland and urges you to move favorably SB 644. SB 644 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. Local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. **Without SB 644, local efforts are stymied as Maryland families face more unstable housing, fears of retaliation and displacement.**

CPSR is the statewide organization with our 900 supporters. Our mission is to address the greatest public health threats of all: nuclear war and climate change, but we are also committed locally to addressing environmental injustice and health disparities. Health disparities may arise from problems with lack of employment, lack of educational opportunities, unhealthy environments, but nothing is more central to causing health disparities than housing insecurity. Evictions represent the worst outcome of housing insecurity, which includes high housing costs in proportion to income, poor housing quality, unstable neighborhood, overcrowding, and homelessness.¹

Prevention is the best medicine and there is evidence that “just cause” legislation reduces eviction filings and evictions.² In a study comparing 4 cities that did have Just Cause Laws and 4

¹ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge frm-asst-sec-111918.html>

² <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

cities that didn't in California, evictions and eviction filings were down significantly in the cities that did, compared to the cities that did not have such laws.

Eviction and eviction filings can have a negative impact on health. A recent review³ of the best designed studies looking at the harms from eviction filings and evictions on children from birth to age 9 found the following:

- 1) A recent eviction was associated with worse mother-reported child health status at age 5 years.
- 2) Evicted children had more hospitalizations and worse access to energy, health care, and childcare.
- 3) For a cohort of at risk 9-year-old children experiencing evictions in the preceding year, there was an association with cognitive losses compared to non-evicted children that were equivalent to the loss of one full year of schooling.
- 4) Evictions of pregnant women were associated with bad birth outcomes including premature birth and low birth weight.
- 5) A study in Cleveland found that by age 2, when there was an eviction filing history, there was a drop in lead testing and increase in lead levels compared to other children and even worse where there was actually an eviction.

Housing is health. Young children exposed to overcrowding and/or multiple moves in one year, were more often reported by their caregivers to have poor health, impaired educational, social or emotional skills, and were measured to have low weight compared to other children.⁴

In older children and adolescents, a history of multiple moves has been associated with mental health problems, substance abuse, increased behavior problems, poor school performance, and increased risk of teen pregnancy: negative outcomes which may handicap them in their adult lives.

SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state the reason for a non-renewal eviction boost helps families, neighborhoods, and communities.

CPSR is a member of the Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition of renters, organizers, and advocates, and **we urge the Committee's report of Favorable on SB 644.**

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³ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2803667>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3134514/>

