



Date of Hearing: February 16, 2024

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**TESTIMONY ON SB0644 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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

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

**FROM:** Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Howard County, Betsy Singer and Laura Salganik, Co-chairs

**The JCRC is submitting this testimony in support of SB0644, Just Cause Termination.**

Ancient Jewish texts are full of laws about keeping homes safe for the people who live in them. The prophet Micah understood that housing is more than a roof over one's head and that to deny a person safe housing is not only robbing them in the present but also robbing their family for generations to come.

Landlords often retaliate against tenants who organize for their rights, demand that repairs be made, or complain about violations of laws about safe housing conditions. Sometimes this retaliation takes the form of refusing to renew their leases. "Just cause" laws protect tenants from this kind of retaliation, and from being evicted for no reason at all. These laws promote housing stability for tenants and neighborhoods.

It is important to recognize that this bill gives locals the right to set these requirements. It doesn't change anything at the state level. This bill would allow counties to adopt "just cause" laws that meet local needs to require landlords to renew residential leases unless they have a "just cause" to terminate the lease such as wanting to occupy the property themselves, having a close relative move in, taking the property off the market, and tenant breach of lease.

At the statehouse last week, there was a group of renters who were desperately worried about their security and the risk of eviction for no or little cause. You need to hear their stories and be responsible for their needs just as you look after the needs of landlords.

**We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.**