



Howard County Council

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Christiana Rigby
Councilmember

District 3

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0481 Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

February 29, 2024

Dear Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee. I am writing to express my strong support for SB0481, legislation that increases the eviction filing fee surcharge and prohibits the District Court from assigning the surcharge to a tenant, establishes an Office of Tenant Rights, creates new renter protections, and prioritizes the new Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program to assist families with children under age five.

Maryland has the highest eviction filing rate in the Country at 48.1 percent, compared to the national average of 7.3 percent. Eviction proceedings disproportionately impact low-income renters as court costs and late fees can increase housing costs by 20 percent. Our residents feel the impact of Maryland's housing shortage as 52 percent of renters are cost-burdened.

The formation of an Office of Tenant Rights would directly address concerns I have heard from residents in Howard County. Renters have few places to turn to when they need help with rodents, maintenance, leasing changes, and more. Establishing an Office of Tenant Rights gives renters, particularly cost-burdened renters, access to resources that greatly increase housing stability.

With the cost of living continuing to rise and wages remaining stagnant, now is the time to act on the state level. Local jurisdictions have already enacted similar legislation. Howard County's right to purchase legislation, [CB13-2020](#), applies to properties with five or more units and is complimentary to the proposed State legislation. SB0481 provides essential protections to renters across the State of Maryland and creates a more equitable system for evictions.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation, and I respectfully encourage a favorable report.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christiana Rigby".

Christiana Rigby