

**Senate Bill 644**  
**Local Just Cause Termination Provisions**  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
February 15, 2024  
**Support**

**Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 644**, which authorizes jurisdiction in Maryland to adopt local laws and ordinances that prohibit landlords of residential properties from non-renewing a lease without having a just cause.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

**SB644 will reduce the incidence of homelessness by allowing Maryland jurisdictions to pass policies that ensure tenants don't experience lease non-renewals without a just cause.** As one of the largest human service providers in Maryland, we continually receive referrals for our Eviction Prevention Program. In Fiscal Year 2022, we received 793 referrals and successfully assisted 233 individuals. In Fiscal Year 2023, the number of referrals increased to 908, but the assistance provided decreased to 153 individuals. Currently, in the first half of Fiscal Year 2024, we have received an astounding 1656 referrals, yet regrettably, funding and program requirements limited our capacity to assist 75. Stable housing is a cornerstone of stable families, and studies show that just cause eviction ordinances have a significant impact on lowering eviction rates and filings.<sup>1</sup> Families shouldn't lose their housing when their lease ends without adequate justification.

**Recent research is clear that preventing evictions stabilizes the family, the school, and the community.** Students facing eviction are 6 times more likely to be chronically absent and 4 times more likely to not complete high school, and students who have experienced housing insecurity were more likely to have a lower GPA as well as poorer mental health outcomes.<sup>2,3</sup> The National Center on Family Homelessness estimates that the graduation rate of children experiencing homelessness is less than 25%.<sup>4</sup> The overarching message is clear: families cannot thrive without safe, stable housing.

SB 644 addresses this uncertainty by mandating that landlords disclose the reason for lease non-renewal. The legislation offers a comprehensive list of potential "just causes," including substantial lease violations, illegal activities, property removal from the market, or personal owner use. This transparency ensures that evictions do not occur under the veil of silence, which may conceal discriminatory intent. SB 644's provisions align with policies enacted by other U.S. jurisdictions, reflecting a commitment to fairness and equity in housing practices.

**On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 644.**

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy

1. Cueller, Juileta. 2019. Effect of "Just Cause" Eviction Ordinances on Eviction in Four California Cities. Journal of Public & International Affairs. <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>
2. <https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications/study-homeless-and-highly-mobile-students-san-mateo-county/housing-instability-and>
3. Mariah Kornbluh, et al., Exploring Housing Insecurity in Relation to Student Success, J Am Coll Health, Apr. 2022.
4. Health Care for the Homeless, Homelessness in Maryland, <https://www.hchmd.org/homelessness-maryland> (last visited Dec. 1, 2023).