



SB0481 – Renters’ Rights and Stabilization Act Of 2024

**Hearing Before the Judicial Proceedings and Education, Energy & Environment
Committees
on February 29, 2024**

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

SUPPORT: Senate Bill 0481 is an ambitious, comprehensive bill which, if enacted, will provide critical support for the housing stability of Maryland renters.

ACDS serves as Anne Arundel County’s nonprofit housing and community development agency, helping Anne Arundel County residents and communities thrive through the provision of safe and affordable housing opportunities, programs to prevent and end homelessness, and community development initiatives. As part of fulfilling this role, ACDS works with affordable housing developers, tenants, landlords, local nonprofits, benevolence organizations and homeless services providers, all with a goal of preventing evictions, supporting safe, stable housing, and ameliorating the effects of evictions for those households whose evictions cannot be prevented. ACDS also implements programs that provide financial counseling and financial assistance for County residents who are striving to purchase a home.

Housing – safe, stable housing - is everything. Housing stability is a key determinant of health, education, and economic outcomes. The Renters’ Rights and Housing Stability Act shows a clear recognition of the importance of housing stability and an understanding that supporting housing stability requires tackling the issue from many different directions. ACDS is supportive of each of the components of the Act. The increased filing fee to support legal services for eviction prevention and an expanded housing voucher program, creating a right of first refusal for renters, prohibiting evictions during extreme weather and other emergencies and the formation of an Office of Tenants’ Rights will all provide substantial and necessary support for Maryland renters.

One very important element of the bill requires emphasis: In three different places, the bill prohibits landlords from passing the filing fee surcharge on to the renter. ACDS urges this Committee to leave those provisions intact. Landlords are permitted to charge late fees, and that is unchanged by this bill. **Passing the filing fee surcharge on to renters would increase the financial burden on households that are already struggling to make ends meet and makes avoiding eviction by paying the amount due even harder. With respect, please do not allow the filing fee surcharge to be passed on to renters.**

For the reasons noted above, ACDS urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on SB0481.