



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 644

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

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 16, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

Presented By Mark Huffman, Co-chair

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 644, which provides enabling legislation that would give allow Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals.

MAP believes every Marylander deserves safe, quality, affordable housing in a community that provides access to the employment, services, and recreation needed to have a good quality of life. This bill helps advance those goals by expressly granting authority to counties to decide when it is appropriate for rental agreements to be non-renewed. That means local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy their locality needs.

Maryland is currently a "no cause" state – that is, a landlord can decide to not to renew a lease without any stated cause. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They are under constant pressure to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities.

SB 644 enables Maryland counties to pass local "just cause" laws that set reasonable limits on lease non-renewals. "Just cause" means that a landlord must have an acceptable reason for choosing not to renew an expiring lease. SB 644 defines what “just cause” is, but leaves flexibility for counties to set policies that fit their local needs. “Just cause” can include substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. This list reflects the policies of other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted just cause policy.

Evidence from across the country, including a [2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab](#) study, finds that just cause eviction ordinances have a noticeable effect on reducing eviction and eviction filing rates. SB 644 ensures local legislatures can pass enforceable laws whereby no one is arbitrarily deprived of their housing. MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 644.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.