



**Testimony of the Mayor and Council of Rockville  
SB 481 – Renters’ Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024  
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. My name is Monique Ashton, and I am the Mayor of the City of Rockville. I thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 481.

The City of Rockville Mayor and Council unanimously support SB 481, which creates a state Office of Tenants’ Rights, increases the filing fee for an eviction, directs the new Office to create a Maryland Tenants’ Bill of Rights, reduces the maximum amount of a security deposit, establishes the right of first refusal, and enhances other renter protections.

We strongly support the provisions of SB 481 for the following reasons:

- Forty-five percent of Rockville households are renters, and this number is continuing to grow. Our residents would greatly benefit from the additional protections and resources in the legislation.
- A state Office of Tenants’ Rights would create another resource for Rockville tenants to go to in seeking guidance and support, which could potentially reduce the volume of requests made to City staff. Since July 5, 2023, City staff have received 441 inquiries, with one dedicated staff-person fielding these requests. The degree of need is likely much larger since not all residents have the means to contact the City.

I would like to note that although we support increasing the filing fee for evictions, the Mayor and Council are concerned that the additional fee might be passed onto the tenant. Increasing the filing fee may also have unintended consequences on small landlords who are less likely to evict tenants than corporate landlords. We ask that the Committee consider potential amendments that would address these concerns. Additionally, we request that you clarify the right of first refusal exceptions to specify that a transfer of a title from a property owner to a family member includes the sale of a property to a family member. Attached to our submitted testimony, is an addendum with additional comments.

In conclusion, all Marylanders deserve housing stability. Strong and fair tenant protections will support residents most in need of affordable housing. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to provide SB 481 with a favorable report. Thank you.

## **Testimony Addendum**

### **SB 481 – Renters Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024**

We ask the Committee to please consider the following to be a part of this bill:

- For tenants renting from single property landlords, that the tenant has Right of First Refusal when the landlord decides to put the property on the market, rather than when the landlord has a contract from another potential buyer.
- For prospective tenants, include in the bill a provision to provide more transparency on fees and rate increases so that prospective tenants can see the history and make an informed choice before signing a lease.

Thank You.