



February 29, 2024

Senate Bill 481

Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024

**Senate Judicial Proceedings and Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committees**

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 481 – Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024. This is a comprehensive Bill that seeks to stabilize the rental market and protect renters.

Maryland has one of the highest eviction filing rates in the country; our average filing rates per household are at least 3 times higher than all of our neighboring states. Unfortunately, too often, these filings are unreasonable, and the system is being abused. Many times the landlords are filing for eviction simply because the rent is late, and they are overusing the court system as their own collection agency. Maryland currently has one of the lowest filing costs in the nation, and this only exacerbates the issues because it favors the landlords always to file. This bill will significantly raise the filing fee from \$8 to \$93, which is still slightly below the national average, and protect the renters by explicitly prohibiting the surcharge being passed on to them.

Another key component of this Bill is creating the new Office of Tenants' Rights. This office will be tasked with the responsibilities of creating and disseminating a Maryland Tenants' Bill of Rights. Having accessible resources and educational materials to help renters better understand the rental process and their rights is fundamental to our ongoing efforts to combat unlawful housing discrimination. The Office of Tenants' Rights will also help implement fair housing testing and serve as a recourse for tenants to take and refer reports of violations to appropriate enforcement agencies.

Given the many complex challenges renters already face today, worsened by the housing shortage, it is imperative that we employ all available options to help renters. Limiting the maximum security deposit to one month's rent, ordering courts to stay eviction in extreme weather conditions, establishing the Rights of First Refusal, and creating a new Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program are good measures in this Bill that will help us stabilize the rental market and protect vulnerable renters. For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 481.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stuart Pittman".

Stuart Pittman
County Executive