

SB0644_AndrewMiller_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Andrew Miller

Position: FAV

2/16/2024

Andrew J. Miller

Baltimore, MD 21209

TESTIMONY ON SB0644

POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Andrew J. Miller

My name is Andrew Miller. I am a resident of District 11. I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0644. I am chair of the Social Justice Advocacy Committee at Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Stevenson, MD; a member of the Baltimore Leadership Council of Jews United for Justice (JUJF); and co-chair of the Synagogue Social Justice Roundtable which has representatives from 13 synagogue communities in Baltimore and Columbia. For me it is a religious obligation to speak out in favor of measures to remedy injustice in our state.

Every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe and stable home. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, “When a family is evicted, family members are often plunged into a downward spiral that may have long and devastating consequences... Children may have to switch schools, personal belongings can be lost ... Research has shown that mental health is also impacted. Low-income women, especially women of color, victims of domestic violence and families with children face a higher risk of eviction.”

According to the Maryland Emergency Rental Assistance Coalition, “in 2023 more than 100,000 Maryland renter households continued to struggle with lingering rent debt in the wake of the pandemic, and families with dependent children made up more than 90% of those households “very likely” to be evicted due to outstanding rent debts.” The Eviction Study analyzed data for Baltimore and showed that the number of Black evictions was 3 times higher than for white renters and the number of Black female-headed household removals was almost 4 times higher than for white male-headed evictions.

Landlords often retaliate against tenants who organize for their rights, demand that repairs be made, or complain about violations of law about safe housing conditions. Sometimes this takes the form of refusing to renew leases. Without a “Just Cause” law as specified in SB0644, tenants are not protected from this kind of retaliation. This bill would allow counties to adopt “just cause” laws to meet local needs by requiring landlords to renew residential leases unless they have a “just cause” to terminate the lease e.g. occupying the property themselves, having a close relative move in, taking the property off the market, or tenant breach of lease.

For these reasons I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.

SB644_PGCEX_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Angela Alsobrooks

Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

SPONSOR: Senators Muse, Carter, and Sydnor

HEARING DATE: February 16, 2024

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.**

The 2021 Prince George's County Economic Development Platform calls for Prince George's County to grow a diverse, dynamic, and sustainable ecosystem that supports the county's goal to be the economic engine of both the region and the State. Grounded in that vision is the belief that we cannot have meaningful economic development without addressing housing affordability and stability.

SB 644 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish "just cause" limitations on lease non-renewals. Without this enabling legislation, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face housing insecurity and instability.

Maryland is currently a "no cause" state – which means that landlords can choose to non-renew tenants' leases without any stated cause. As such, individuals, working families and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they are not in violation of their lease. In addition to increasing rents and the scarcity of affordable housing options, Maryland renters face the increased uncertainty of involuntary displacement, causing additional household costs to move, and negative impacts on work commutes, access to schools, and instability in their housing record, which can negatively impact their credit access and hence their ability to access future housing options.

One proven way to minimize this uncertainty and support housing stability is through establishing Just Cause provisions. Just Cause requires that a landlord disclose the reason for choosing not to renew an existing tenant's lease. Just Cause does not prohibit landlords who have legitimate reasons for non-renewals to do so. It simply offers a list of options for what "just cause" may include and gives that ultimate authority to localities to decide.

SB 644 recognizes that localities want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that landlords state a legitimate reason for an eviction through lease non-renewal eviction supports the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities. It can also streamline court processes and reduces eviction filings that may be filed for arbitrary reasons against tenants who are otherwise following the terms of their lease and the law.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS SB 644** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

SB644_AnitaLampel_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Anita Lampel

Position: FAV

SB644_AnitaLampel_FAV

Date of Hearing 2/13/2024

Anita Lampel
Bethesda, MD, 20817

TESTIMONY ON SB#644 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Landlord and Tenant-Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies-Local Just Cause
Termination Provisions

TO: Chair Will Smith, Vice-chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Anita Lampel

My name is Anita Lampel. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#644.

I am a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, the Womens' Democratic Club of Montgomery County, and Giving Together, a philanthropic group. My Jewish values and ethics call upon me to not abuse the poor or leave them without shelter. From this flows my support of SB644, which would end evictions of persons at the end of their lease without good cause to do so.

My mother's parents immigrated and lived lives of poverty, seven children in a two-bedroom apartment. How hard was that! And our families in Maryland who make their rent payments, sometimes at the cost of medicine or food, and still do not have leases renewed for no good cause? How can we have this in 2024? And this happens because we would not need legislation if it did not. I was in the Montgomery County Council audience when there was a call from councilmembers for just such a bill so they could address the problems in our county correctly.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#644.

SB0644-FAV-AnnaLevy_02-16-2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Anna Levy

Position: FAV

February 16, 2024

Anna T. Levy
Rockville, MD 20852

TESTIMONY ON BILL SB0644/HB0477 – Position: FAVORABLE
Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Anna T. Levy

My name is Anna T. Levy, a resident of Rockville, MD, District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0644, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

Safe and stable housing has far reaching economic, health, and social benefits to individuals, families, and communities, and is key to reducing racial inequities. Renters routinely have little agency when faced with threats to maintaining stable housing. As a Jewish person, I am taught that all people should have *dei machsoro*, resources sufficient for each person's needs. (Deut. 15:7-8) The home is a critical source of stability for individuals and families. It provides a nexus for social interactions for families, friends, and communities. We know from published research, including a recent analysis by the [Maryland Center for Economic Policy](#), and those of Matthew Desmond and Princeton's Eviction Lab, that the disruption resulting from evictions contributes to long term physical, psychological, educational, and economic damage that can condemn people to poverty and destabilize communities.

Evictions create significant costs for state and local government related to funding for shelter and education, as well as health care provided in hospitals instead of by community-based providers, transportation costs for homeless youth, and foster care. Notably, evictions have a disparate impact on Black and brown households in Maryland. Decreasing the number of evictions would help to reduce significant racial inequities and strengthen the financial status of individuals and our communities. Thus, we have an obligation to make sure that people can stay in their homes.

There are valid contractual reasons for non-renewal of rental leases. Bill HB0477 would enable local jurisdictions to protect tenants who are fulfilling their contractual obligations so that they can continue to maintain a safe and stable home. Currently, landlords can decide not to renew a tenant's lease for any reason, even when a tenant fully meets their rent and fee obligations and adheres to the terms of their lease. This means that a landlord can force out a tenant who complains about unsafe or unhealthy conditions or because the landlord wants to dramatically raise rents. SB0644 does not negate a landlord's right to not renew the lease of disruptive or delinquent tenants. It simply protects tenants who are doing the right thing to stay in their homes by requiring landlords to provide a just cause for non-renewal of a lease.

SB0644 grants authority to counties and local policymakers to determine the appropriate “just cause” policy to meet the needs of their locality. The bill defines “just cause”, but rather than imposing specifics, provides a list of what a county might include. The options included reflect policies that have been enacted in other U.S. jurisdictions. Just cause eviction legislation has been introduced numerous times in different Maryland counties, including Montgomery County, where I live and where it has previously been supported by the Montgomery County Council and the Montgomery County legislative delegation. Requiring just cause as a precondition for an eviction can be a policy that boosts the stability of the housing market by stabilizing families, neighborhoods, and communities to the benefit of all.

I respectfully urge a favorable report from the Committee in support of passage of SB0644.

SB0644-2024 Renters Rights Act 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: ANNA RUBIN

Position: FAV

SB0644_AnnaRubin_FAV
Feb. 15, 2024
Anna Rubin
Columbia, MD 21045

TESTIMONY ON SB0644 POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Dr. Anna Rubin

My name is Anna Rubin. I am a resident of District 13. I am submitting this testimony supporting SB0644, the Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions – commonly known as the Renters’ Rights Act.

I am a member of Columbia Jewish Congregation and act as the co-chair of its Social Action Committee and a member of the CJC Standing for Racial Justice Committee. I am also the chair of the Indivisible Howard County Immigration Action Team.

In every organization that I belong to, supporting housing justice is the foundation for a stable functioning community. Every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe and stable home. But some landlords think that their own profit is more important than safety and stability for Black and brown renters, and they let the buildings they own fall into disrepair, or throw whole families out on the street to try to squeeze more money out of the next renters.

The prophet Micah understood that housing is more than a roof over one's head and that to deny a person safe housing is not only robbing them in the present but also robbing their family for generations to come. My father was born in present day Lithuania and he and his family were constantly moving to avoid programs and poverty. Similarly, when he and his family immigrated to the US in the pre-World War I period, they moved constantly, one step ahead or behind of the landlords and eviction. It took years for him to establish economic stability and support his parents and sisters and having stable homes was a huge achievement for the entire family.

Many poor citizens face a competitive housing market because of the lack of affordable housing. While addressing that issue is a long-term problem, we can help our communities survive and thrive now by passing this bill.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.

Sincerely,
Dr. Anna Rubin

Antione Hudnell, Testimony for Just Cause Bill SB

Uploaded by: Antione Hudnell

Position: FAV

Antione Hudnell

SB 644 — Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Position: Support

My name is Antione Hudnell, and I'm a renter and resident of Baltimore City. I support SB 644, which would allow Baltimore City and the counties to pass their own just cause eviction laws.

I have experienced a landlord threat to non-renew my lease for retaliatory reasons, and it was devastating to my family. I moved into my current home in August 2018, because it was a good property compared to other options I was looking at. I have two little kids, one has autism, and our home is close to their school. I have a great community around me now, I know all of my neighbors and everybody looks out for each other.

In 2022, the property had some issues with the conditions of disrepair, and I brought this up with the landlord. Instead of working with me to fix the issues, he sent me a notice to nonrenew the lease and vacate the property and then filed an eviction case against me.

This was hard on my family, we didn't have enough time to find somewhere as good. I was worried about keeping my kids in the same school and losing our community. I won the court case because the landlord had not provided me with the right notice. After that, the landlord finally started to work with me. They fixed the issues and are applying for a rental license.

Things are working out now, but I never should have had to go through the threat of eviction just because I brought up valid concerns about the conditions of the property. If the landlord had not screwed up the notice, I probably would have lost my case. My family would have been evicted, and my kids would have had to leave their school, neighbors and friends. If Baltimore City had a just cause eviction law, the landlord would have had to provide a legitimate reason for non-renewing my lease – instead of trying to give no reason at all.

For these reasons, I ask the Committee to give a favorable report on SB 644.

Antione Hudnell

SB644_ArielleJuberg_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Arielle Juberg

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of District 8. **I am testifying in support of SB644.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

As a former renter, I know that finding affordable and safe housing is difficult. Renters in our state shouldn't live with the constant fear of displacement from lease-non-renewal evictions, especially when they have followed all the rules.

During the pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. A 2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab found "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."¹ Without this bill, jurisdictions face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what's acceptable and when. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. CASA recently reported that on November 22, 2023, seven residents of the Evergreen Terrace Apartments in Hyattsville, MD publicly denounced evictions that they believed were unjust, based on false evidence targeting immigrant and working-class families.² In October 2023, the National Equity Atlas reported an estimated 98,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.³ Of those, 79% of tenants are people of color, including Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans. Crucially, 47% of those households include children, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown, and social scientists have documented declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction.⁴ People of color form less than half of this state's population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB644**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Arielle Juberg
3411 Upton Road
Baltimore, MD 21234
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

² <https://wearecasa.org/tenants-at-evergreen-terrace-apartments-call-out-discriminatory-and-unjust-evict/>

³ <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

⁴ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondkimbro.evictions.fallout.sf2015_2.pdf

SB0644-JPR-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Brandon Scott

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB0644

February 16, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Mayor Brandon M. Scott, City of Baltimore
RE: Senate Bill 644 – Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover
Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that my Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 644.

SB 644 would authorize a jurisdiction to enact a local law that would prohibit a landlord from failing to renew a lease without providing a just cause. The bill only applies to residential properties and provides a range of reasons the landlord can use to provide “just cause” of the non-renewal.

This bill strikes a reasonable balance to ensure that both tenants and landlords have clarity and certainty regarding their lease renewals. It does not mandate that a landlord renew a tenant’s lease. Rather, it requires that a reason (“just cause”) be given to the tenant if the lease is not going to be renewed. The reasons are broad and include breach of lease, failing to cease disorderly conduct, illegal activity, refusing access for repairs, and the inability to complete renovations while the building is occupied. “Just cause” also allows for the landlord in good faith to not renew the rental if they wish to remove the property from the market or want to recover possession of the property for their use or the use of their family.

It is important to note that the bill authorizes rather than mandates local jurisdictions to enact a local just cause law. This allows jurisdictions to make decisions in the best interest of their residents and unique local circumstances. In 2021, the Baltimore City Council attempted to pass local legislation to establish just cause evictions, but the legislation could not be approved by the City’s law department for form and legal sufficiency as state law change would be required. SB 644 would make the necessary changes to allow Baltimore City to pursue local legislation, should we wish.

For these reasons, I request a **favorable** report on SB 644.

*Annapolis – phone: 410.269.0207 • fax: 410.269.6785
Baltimore – phone: 410.396.3497 • fax: 410.396.5136
<https://mogr.baltimorecity.gov>*

SB 644 - Support from Local Jurisdictions .pdf

Uploaded by: C. Anthony Muse

Position: FAV

C. ANTHONY MUSE
Legislative District 26
Prince George's County



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Anthony.Muse@senate.state.md.us

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee
Vice Chair, Rules Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Letter of Support for Just Cause Eviction (SB 644) from 35 County and Municipal Elected Officials

Dear members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Over one-third of Maryland families rent their homes, and our residents deserve strong protections to ensure their stability and well-being. From access to employment, food, transportation, and education, an eviction of any family is debilitating. It's time for our Maryland laws and policies to uphold the value of stable housing as a fundamental human right.

Under current state law, with just 60 days' notice, a landlord can refuse to renew a lease and evict a residential tenant for any reason or no reason at all. Thousands of tenants lose their homes through this process, and they must then find new housing, new schools for their children, new transportation routes, and sometimes new jobs.

These evictions put a tremendous burden on renters, with a disproportionately heavy burden on low-wage renters, who have very few other housing options in an increasingly unaffordable housing market. Families of color, single-parent families, and immigrant families face these burdens and hardships the most. Currently, wages do not align with the costs of the housing market. When these families cannot renew their leases, they often find themselves stressed trying to find another housing option suitable for them. Some families can even find themselves facing homelessness because they cannot find another housing option.

Just Cause Eviction requires a landlord to provide a justifiable reason ("cause") when deciding not to renew a lease and must provide this cause in their non-renewal notice to the tenant. This legislation has been introduced in various forms in the state of Maryland for years, and now is the time for it to achieve final passage.

Under current state law, counties in Maryland do not have the authority to address Just Cause Eviction. However, since counties have an important and unique interest in maintaining their residents' housing stability, they should have the authority to implement Just Cause Eviction and decide for their communities. The [2023 Just Cause Eviction legislation](#), would have given authority to Maryland counties and Baltimore City to implement Just Cause Eviction and determine the appropriate circumstances in which a lease can be non-renewed.

Numerous counties, cities, and states throughout the country have adopted Just Cause Eviction laws, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New Jersey, and Washington State. There is no

evidence that Just Cause eviction laws have a negative impact on the housing market in any of these jurisdictions.

The undersigned local elected officials urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass Just Cause Eviction legislation in 2024 to provide authority to local jurisdictions to pass local Just Cause Eviction policies.

Signed,

Montgomery County
County Executive
Marc Elrich

Montgomery County
Councilmember
Kate Stewart

Montgomery County
Councilmember
Laurie-Anne Sayles

Montgomery County
Councilmember
Kirstin Mink

Montgomery County
Councilmember
Will Jawando

Takoma Park
Mayor
Talisha Searcy

Takoma Park
Councilmember
Cindy Dyballa

Takoma Park
Councilmember
Jason B. Small

Takoma Park
Councilmember
Cara Honzak

Takoma Park
Councilmember
Terry J. Seamens

Takoma Park
Councilmember
Randy Gibson

Takoma Park
Councilmember
Shana Fulcher

Howard County
Councilmember
Christiana Rigby

Howard County
Councilmember
Liz Walsh

Baltimore City
Mayor
Brandon Scott

Baltimore City
Comptroller
Bill Henry

Baltimore City
Councilmember
Odette Ramos

Baltimore City
Councilmember
Kristerfer Burnett

Baltimore City
Councilmember
Mark Conway

Annapolis City
Alderman
DaJuan Gay

Anne Arundel County
Councilmember
Pete Smith

Prince George's County
Council Chair
Jolene Ivey

Hyattsville
Councilmember
Danny Schaible

Hyattsville
Councilmember
Rommel Sandino

College Park
Mayor Pro Tem
Denise Mitchell

New Carrollton
Council Chair
Briana Urbina

Mt. Rainer
Mayor
Celina Benitez

Mt. Rainer
Councilmember
Danielle S. Carter

Cheverly
Vice Mayor & Councilmember
Amy Fry

City of Bladensburg
Councilmember
Marilyn Blout

Riverdale Park Town
Councilmember
Richard Smith

Fredrick County
County Executive
Jessica Fitzwater

Fredrick County
Council Vice President
Kavonte Duckett

Crisfield City
Mayor
Darlene Taylor

Crisfield City
Councilmember
LaVerne Johnson

SB 644 - Testimony b4 JPR .pdf

Uploaded by: C. Anthony Muse

Position: FAV

C. ANTHONY MUSE
Legislative District 26
Prince George's County



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Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee
Vice Chair, Rules Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Good afternoon Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Senate Bill 644, Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provision is a statewide enabling bill authorizing a county, including Baltimore City, to adopt by local law or ordinance provisions prohibiting a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease period or from terminating a holdover tenancy without just cause; establishing certain requirements for a local law or ordinance adopted in accordance with this Act; and generally relating to residential leases and holdover tenancies.

Housing is a basic human need, and the urgency for housing security should be a priority this legislative session.

Displacement from a home has a tremendous negative impact on vulnerable residents in our community and can lead to difficulty finding and maintaining a job, student transiency, and homelessness, among other negative impacts. Our current system creates an imbalance of power when a landlord can remove a tenant from their home with just 60 days' notice and no reason provided, causing many residents to avoid reporting unsafe conditions or requesting necessary repairs out of fear of retaliation.

I'm proud to reintroduce SB 644 to protect our residents and vulnerable neighbors from unjust eviction while giving localities the option to enact county legislation in accordance with state law. This statewide enabling legislation allows jurisdictions to determine their own Just Cause stipulations.

For these reasons, I urge your **favorable vote** for **SB 644**.

SB644_CarolStern_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: CAROL STERN

Position: FAV

**Carol Stern
4550 North Park Avenue Apt. T106
Chevy Chase, MD 20815**

**TESTIMONY ON SB644 - FAVORABLE
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies-
Local Just Cause Termination Provisions**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

My name is Carol Stern from Chevy Chase in District 16 and I am a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda. I am providing this testimony in support of SB644. Our Jewish tradition's primary concern regarding landlord-tenant relations is the question of permanence. Landlords are forbidden from evicting tenants without due warning and may not evict tenants during the winter months, when new housing will be hard to find. According to the great Jewish sage and philosopher, Moses Maimonides, a landlord must give the tenant sufficient notice before terminating a lease “so that the tenant can look for another place and will not be abandoned in the street”. The landlord, Maimonides suggests, will be held responsible if a tenant becomes homeless as the result of eviction. These are the values that I bring when asking you to support this Just Cause Eviction bill.

Nobody should lose their home because of the whims of their landlord. Landlords often retaliate against tenants who organize for their rights, demand that repairs be made, or complain about violations of laws about safe housing conditions. Sometimes this retaliation takes the form of refusing to renew their leases. “Just cause” laws protect tenants from this kind of retaliation, and from being evicted for no reason at all. These laws promote housing stability for tenants and neighborhoods. **This bill would allow counties to adopt “just cause” laws that meet local needs and my county, Montgomery County, is ready to adopt this law.**

Every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe and stable home. But some greedy landlords think that their own profit is more important than safety and stability for Black and brown renters, and they let the buildings they own fall into disrepair, or throw whole families out on the street to try to squeeze more money out of the next renters.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB644.

SB0644_Local_Just_Cause_Termination_Provisions_MLC

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0644

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

Bill Sponsor: Senator Muse

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor SB0644 alf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

This bill provides enabling legislation that would authorize a county to adopt, by local law or ordinance, provisions that prohibit a landlord from terminating a residential lease or refusing to renew a lease without just cause.

Evictions and non-renewals of leases have skyrocketed in Maryland. Approx. **34,000** households will likely face eviction next year. Roughly 1 in 10 evictions result in a shelter entry, meaning 1,700 households (4,420 individuals) will become homeless. This is an alarming rate of homelessness and it causes a very thorny problem. While needing to ensure that landlords rights are upheld, we also need to ensure that people are not turned out of their homes without just cause.

We believe that this bill strikes that balance. It does allow landlords to terminate a lease or refuse to renew when the tenant has engaged in disorderly or illegal conduct on the premises, or refuses to grant the landlord access to the property, or otherwise breaches the lease conditions. It does not allow the landlord to essentially evict the tenant without just cause and without notice.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES--2024 WRITTEN TESTIMONY MD S

Uploaded by: Charles Michaels

Position: FAV

BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Feb. 16, 2024

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Beyond the Boundaries is part of Renters United Maryland and urges you to move favorable on SB 644. SB 644 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. That means local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy that their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. **Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing and fears of retaliation and displacement.**

Beyond the Boundaries is an Archdiocesan program with parish members in parishes throughout the Archdiocese. It is led by a Steering Committee and an ex officio member of the Steering Committee is a Baltimore bishop. We advocate and educate on affordable and inclusive housing, both for homeowners and tenants, on a State and regional basis, emphasizing the link between housing, racism and poverty. This just cause legislation is within that mission.

What is “just cause” policy and why is it needed? Maryland is currently a “no cause” state – that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew without any stated cause. This means that working families and their children face the constant threat of displacement, *even when they follow all the rules*. They are under constant pressure to stay quiet and accept declining conditions, arbitrary policies, and increasing rents just to stay in their communities and keep their children in their local school. Or, they can speak up – on their own or as a group – and face a likely “non-renewal” at the end of their lease and displacement from their community.

Why this legislation now? **Maryland has seen a spike in the number of no-cause, evictions known as “Tenant Holding Over” evictions– a 117% increase in average Tenant Holding Over complaint filings each month since 2020.** This mirrors a national trend in which “[n]early half of U.S. renter households reported experiencing significant pressure to move during the previous 6 months.”¹ **In addition to increasing rents and fewer market options, Maryland families face the specter of non-renewal and displacement now more than ever.**

¹ HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings From New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (June-Aug. 2023 data).

"Just cause" addresses this uncertainty by providing that a landlord must disclose the reason for choosing not to renew. SB 644 provides a list of options for what "just cause," as adopted by a county, may include, such as substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. Requiring landlords to disclose the reason for a lease non-renewal helps ensure that no eviction takes place under a cover of silence that can hide discriminatory intent. SB 644's list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted. To be clear, this is a list that localities are free to adopt or change to meet local housing needs.

Why a Local Enabling bill? Since 2008, just cause eviction legislation has been introduced 9 times – including multiple statewide bills, as well as bills specific to Prince George's County and Montgomery County. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency's end. These efforts demonstrate a sustained desire in Maryland localities for the authority to enact just cause.

Based on available research, **Maryland is one of only 6 states in the country that preempts localities from enacting just cause eviction policies.** Other states at least allow localities to pass their own just cause eviction laws. Pennsylvania is a good example. It has allowed Philadelphia to pass a just cause eviction law to promote greater housing stability. If this body has concerns about just cause eviction policy, it should allow localities to see what works best for their housing market and policy goals. At least 5 states, the District of Columbia (since 1985), and 16 localities including Philadelphia (since 2018) have adopted just cause eviction laws.

New Jersey's just cause law (since 1974) demonstrates that the benefit of just cause far outweighs the hypothetical that it hurts development. ["Something in the Garden State is clearly working. According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding."](#)

Additionally, looking at 4 localities in California, a [2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab](#) study finds that "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."

SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state a legitimate reason for an eviction through lease non-renewal eviction boosts the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Beyond the Boundaries is a member of Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition of renters, organizers, and advocates, and **we urge the Committee's report of Favorable on SB 644.**

SB 644 Just Cause Enabling RUM Testimony Template.

Uploaded by: Chelsea Ortega

Position: FAV



SANTONI, VOCCI & ORTEGA LLC

201 W. Padonia Rd. Ste. 101A Lutherville – Timonium, MD 21093

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SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Feb. 16, 2024

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Santoni, Vocci & Ortega, LLC is part of Renters United Maryland and urges you to move favorable on SB 644. SB 644 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. That means local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy that their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. **Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing and fears of retaliation and displacement.**

Santoni, Vocci & Ortega, LLC is a private tenants’ rights firm, representing tenants living in uninhabitable conditions, or have been the subject of an illegal eviction or debt collection violations. We often see many tenants who are afraid of speaking up about terrible living conditions or illegal debt collection practices because they fear retaliation from their landlord. This is especially true for our most vulnerable populations, including the elderly.

What is “just cause” policy and why is it needed? Maryland is currently a “no cause” state – that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew without any stated cause. This means that working families and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They are under constant pressure to stay quiet and accept declining conditions, arbitrary policies, and increasing rents just to stay in their communities and keep their children in their local school. Or, they can speak up – on their own or as a group – and face a likely “non-renewal” at the end of their lease and displacement from their community.

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“Just cause” addresses this uncertainty by providing that a landlord must disclose the reason for choosing not to renew. SB 644 provides a list of options for what “just cause,” as adopted by a county,

¹ HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings From New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (June-Aug. 2023 data).

may include, such as substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. Requiring landlords to disclose the reason for a lease non-renewal helps ensure that no eviction takes place under a cover of silence that can hide discriminatory intent. SB 644's list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted. To be clear, this is a list that localities are free to adopt or change to meet local housing needs.

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SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state a legitimate reason for an eviction through lease non-renewal eviction boosts the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Santoni, Vocci & Ortega, LLC is a member of Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition of renters, organizers, and advocates, and **we urge the Committee's report of Favorable on SB 644.**

SB644 - Just Cause Eviction Enabling.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Christina Nemphos

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of Maryland District 40 and live in the Medfield neighborhood of Baltimore. **I am testifying in support of SB644.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

HB477 allows local jurisdictions to require a just basis for landlords to either refuse to renew or to cut off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, limiting how and when lease non-renewals occur, requiring landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or requiring landlords to prove a just cause in court.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They have no choice but to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities. A 2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab found “just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.”¹ Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. **This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what’s acceptable and when.** It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. Our partners at CASA recently reported that on November 22, 2023, seven residents of the Evergreen Terrace Apartments in Hyattsville, MD publicly denounced evictions that they believed were unjust, based on false evidence targeting immigrant and working class families.²

In October 2023, the National Equity Atlas reported an estimated 98,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.³ Of those, 79% of tenants are people of color, including Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans, and 47% of those households include children. For reference, people of color form less than half of this state’s population; supporting their ability to remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children, as social scientists have documented declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction.⁴

Stable housing is a foundational need. Enabling the ability of local jurisdictions to pass just cause eviction legislation is an investment in racial equity and an investment in our collective future. It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB644.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Christina Nemphos
1301 W. 42nd St, Baltimore, Md 21211
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

² <https://wearecasa.org/tenants-at-evergreen-terrace-apartments-call-out-discriminatory-and-unjust-evict/>

³ <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

⁴ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondkimbro.evictions.fallout.sf2015_2.pdf

SB644_DHCD_SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Chuck Cook

Position: FAV



WES MOORE
Governor
ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor
JACOB R. DAY
Secretary
JULIA GLANZ
Deputy Secretary

DATE: February 16, 2024

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 644

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

COMMITTEE: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

Senate Bill 644 is enabling legislation that would allow counties and Baltimore City to enact provisions that prohibit landlords from failing to renew a residential lease or terminating a holdover tenancy without just cause. The bill leaves the definition of “just cause” up to the local jurisdictions but specifies that it may include instances such as a tenant causing substantial damage to the premises, continually disturbing the peace and quiet of other tenants, engaging in illegal activity on the premises, or unreasonably refusing the landlord access to the premises to make inspections or repairs. “Just cause” may also include the landlord taking the leased premises off the rental market, either to make improvements or repairs or for their own use or that of a close relative.

Background and Analysis:

Under current law, a landlord must provide notice to a tenant of intent to terminate a tenancy, whether the tenant’s lease is expiring, or the tenant is a holdover on a month-to-month or other basis. In most cases, this notice is required 60 days in advance of the termination of the tenancy. This legislation allows counties (and Baltimore City, which enacted its own just cause legislation in 2021) to enact local legislation requiring landlords to renew a tenancy, absent just cause.

Giving Maryland counties the authority to enact such provisions is anticipated to increase housing stability across the state. Studies have shown that encouraging long-term tenancy benefits both renters and communities by slowing displacement and gentrification, maintaining neighborhood stability, and preventing the material hardship of being forced to find new housing, which is particularly disruptive for mothers and young children. Any new tenant protections ultimately enacted under this law will be implemented through the democratic process at the county level and will reflect the diversity of Maryland’s housing market across jurisdictions. Additionally, the exemptions included under the law will help protect property owners, helping to ensure that Maryland maintains a healthy rental housing stock. DHCD supports granting jurisdictions another potential tool to address the housing crisis and keep Marylanders housed.

DHCD Position:

The Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 644.



SB0644_PATH-AIM-ACT_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Chuck Koplik

Position: FAV



Date of Hearing: February 16, 2024
Charles M. Koplik, Odenton, Maryland 21113

TESTIMONY ON SB0644 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

TO: Chair Senator Will Smith, Vice Chair Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Action in Montgomery (AIM), People Acting Together in Howard (PATH), and Anne Arundel Connecting Together (ACT). We are a coalition of three independent county organizations representing over 65 churches, mosques, synagogues and community groups.

AIM, ACT, and PATH are submitting this testimony in support of SB0644, Just Cause Termination.

I was at the statehouse yesterday with AIM, ACT, and PATH, lobbying for this legislation and our group included renters who were desperately worried about their security and the risk of eviction for no or little cause. You need to hear their stories and be responsible for their needs just as you look after the needs of landlords. Ancient Biblical texts say – “Those who lie in bed at night planning iniquity and designing evil...covet fields, and seize them; houses, and take them away. They defraud a person of their home; a person of their inheritance” — Micah 2: 1-3. The prophet Micah understood that housing is more than a roof over one’s head and that to deny a person safe housing is not only robbing them in the present but also robbing their family for generations to come.

Maryland has the highest rate of evictions of any US state bar none. That’s not a statistic of which to be proud. In 2018, Maryland’s eviction filing rate was 69.6% – an extreme outlier rate compared to the national average of nearly 8% (Estimating Eviction Prevalence Across the United States, Ashley Gromis, Ian Fellows, James R. Hendrickson and Matthew Desmond).

Landlords often retaliate against tenants who organize for their rights, demand that repairs be made, or complain about violations of laws about safe housing conditions. Sometimes this retaliation takes the form of refusing to renew their leases. “Just cause” laws protect tenants from this kind of retaliation, and from being evicted for no reason at all. These laws promote housing stability for tenants and neighborhoods.

This bill would allow counties to adopt “just cause” laws that meet local needs to require landlords to renew residential leases unless they have a “just cause” to terminate the lease such as wanting to occupy the property themselves, having a close relative move in, taking the property off the market, and tenant breach of lease.

We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.

SB 644 DRM Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Cooper Gerus

Position: FAV



Empowerment. Integration. Equality.

1500 Union Ave., Suite 2000, Baltimore, MD 21211

Phone: 410-727-6352 | Fax: 410-727-6389

www.DisabilityRightsMD.org

Disability Rights Maryland

SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Feb. 16, 2024 at 10:00 AM

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Disability Rights Maryland is **part of Renters United Maryland and urges you to move favorably on SB 644**. SB 644 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. That means local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy that their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. **Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing and fears of retaliation and displacement.**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the federally designated Protection & Advocacy agency¹ in Maryland mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. One of DRM’s goals is to end the unnecessary segregation and institutionalization of Marylanders with disabilities. To that end, DRM’s Housing and Community Inclusion team works to expand housing opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities and to maintain housing stability to ensure people with disabilities can participate fully in all aspects of community life, and have equal access to opportunities. The estimated 45 million Americans with disabilities² are more likely than their non-disabled peers to experience unemployment and poverty, and nationwide, more than 4.2 million people with disabilities spend more than half of their income on rent.³ In Maryland, most of the estimated 399,500 low-income residents who spend more than half of their income on rent receive no rental assistance due to funding limitations.⁴ While housing discrimination against people with disabilities is prohibited under federal law, it remains distressingly common: in 2019, about 59% of all housing discrimination complaints brought to private Fair Housing Organizations (FHOs) and state and federal agencies were based on disability.⁵ Eviction - including non-renewal of a lease without cause - can result in homelessness or institutionalization, exacerbating an

¹ For more information on Protection & Advocacy agencies, see NATIONAL DISABILITY RIGHTS NETWORK, <https://www.ndrn.org/> (last visited June 18, 2021).

² 13.5% of the 333.29 million individuals in the U.S. population are people with disabilities. DISABILITY IN THE U.S. – STATISTICS AND FACTS (2023), <https://www.statista.com/topics/4380/disability-in-the-us/#topicOverview> (last visited February 8, 2024).

³ More than 4.2 million (18% of 23.4 million low-income renters) people with disabilities nationwide pay more than half of their income on rent. CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES, UNITED STATES FEDERAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE FACT SHEET (2022), [12-10-19hou-factsheet-us.pdf](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12-10-19hou-factsheet-us.pdf) (cbpp.org) (last visited February 8, 2024).

⁴ CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES, MARYLAND FEDERAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE FACT SHEET (2022), <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12-10-19hou-factsheet-md.pdf> (last visited February 8, 2024).

⁵ NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE, FAIR HOUSING IN JEOPARDY: TRUMP ADMINISTRATION UNDERMINES CRITICAL TOOLS FOR ACHIEVING RACIAL EQUITY 34 (2020), <https://nationalfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/NFHA-2020-Fair-Housing-Trends-Report.pdf>.

individual's disabilities, and worsening health outcomes.

What is “just cause” policy and why is it needed? Maryland is currently a "no cause" state – that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew a lease without “just cause.” This means that renters of all types face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They are under constant pressure to accept declining conditions, arbitrary policies, and increasing rents, or, they can speak up and face a likely “non-renewal” at the end of their lease and displacement from their community.

Why this legislation now? **Maryland has seen a spike in the number of no-cause, evictions filed as “Tenant Holding Over” complaints – which have increased 117% on average each month since 2020.** This mirrors a national trend in which “[n]early half of U.S. renter households reported experiencing significant pressure to move during the previous 6 months.”⁶ **In addition to increasing rents and fewer market options, Maryland families face the specter of non-renewal and displacement now more than ever.**

A "just cause" requirement for non-renewal addresses this uncertainty by providing that a landlord must have a legitimate reason for non-renewal, which they must disclose. SB 644 provides a list of options for what “just cause,” as adopted by a county, may include, such as substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. Requiring landlords to disclose the reason for a lease non-renewal helps ensure that no eviction takes place under a cover of silence that can hide discriminatory intent. SB 644’s list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions have enacted. *To be clear, this is a list that localities are free to adopt or change to meet local housing needs.*

Why a Local Enabling bill? Since 2008, just cause eviction legislation has been introduced nine times – including multiple statewide bills, as well as bills specific to Prince George’s County and Montgomery County. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency’s end. These efforts demonstrate a sustained desire in Maryland localities for just cause policies.

Washington, D.C. (since 1985) and Philadelphia (since 2018) have adopted just cause eviction policies, and the state of New Jersey, too (since 1974). New Jersey’s policy endeavor over many decades demonstrates that the benefit of just cause far outweighs the hypothetical that it hurts development. “Something in the Garden State is clearly working. According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding.”

⁶ HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings From New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (based on June-Aug. 2023 data).

Additionally, looking at 4 localities in California, a 2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab study finds that "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."

SB 644 recognizes that local legislative bodies want to aid their renters in achieving stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce, the local economy and the community. Requiring just cause as a precondition for an eviction can be a tailored policy that boosts the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities.

SB 644 ensures local legislatures can pass enforceable laws whereby no one is evicted from their housing without just cause. We urge the Committee's report of Favorable on SB 644.

For more information, please contact:

Cooper Alec Gerus (he/him)
Staff Attorney
Disability Rights Maryland
1500 Union Avenue, Ste. 2000
Baltimore, MD 21211
(202)-709-8513
CooperG@DisabilityRightsMD.org

Testimony SB0644.pdf

Uploaded by: Councilwoman Odette Ramos

Position: FAV



Odette Ramos

Baltimore City Councilwoman

District 14

(410) 396 - 4814

odette.ramos@baltimorecity.gov

100 N. Holliday Street, Room 506

Baltimore MD 21202

Testimony

SB0644 Landlord Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

February 15, 2024

FAVORABLE

Honorable Chair Smith and Distinguished Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to urge your support for **SB0644 Landlord Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions**.

SB0644 will provide jurisdictions with the authority to enact local “Just Cause” eviction ordinances. These laws protect renters from arbitrary and retaliatory lease terminations that destabilize the lives of working people, their children, and their communities.

The Baltimore City Council passed a law in 2021 to prohibit landlords from evicting someone after the end of a lease for 180 days after the end of the State of Emergency, and that only specific causes for eviction were allowed before then. Our law department warned us then that we could be sued because it was not in the Baltimore City Council’s power to make laws regarding landlord/tenant matters. We received additional information that during a state of emergency we may not be sued. However, Baltimore City was the subject of litigation as a result of our actions, and the law was rendered moot before the bill expired on Dec 31, 2021.

Therefore, SB0644 is vital. The Baltimore City Council wanted to take significant action to help our renters, and SB0644 would give us the authority to do that in holdover cases.

I urge your favorable report for this legislation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions. I can be reached on 410-396-4814 or via email at odette.ramos@baltimorecity.gov.

Respectfully Submitted:

Odette Ramos
Baltimore City Councilwoman, District 14

Cynise Riley Support SB 644.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynise Riley

Position: FAV

Support for SB 644

Hearing of Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Feb. 16, 2024

My name is Cynise Riley and without just cause eviction protections, I would likely have become homeless. I've lived in the same apartment building in Baltimore City since 2013. In 2021, I survived an incident of domestic violence. This was reported to Baltimore City police and the situation was resolved. My landlord was outraged and wouldn't listen when I tried to explain what had happened and how it was domestic violence related; instead he tried to evict me. He falsely claimed that I wasn't keeping the apartment clean and sent me a notice to non-renew my lease. To turn up the pressure, he even sent a notice of non-renewal to my sister who lived in the same building. When I refused to leave, he filed for eviction. I got legal representation, fought back and won the right to stay through a settlement.

Why was I able to fight back against a non-renewal? Just cause eviction is the answer! As with 80,000+ apartments throughout Maryland, my unit has a special federal tax break called the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. In return, the landlord (a private, for-profit company) was required to put a "just cause" provision in my lease saying that they couldn't refuse to renew my lease for any discriminatory or arbitrary reason. My landlord knew that the housekeeping complaint was bogus and that they couldn't prove it in court, so they settled.

I work as an assistant property manager and make some money, but housing choices for me in today's market are scarce, so I am thankful that I can stay in my home and community. "Just cause" is what it sounds like -- "justice." It tells the landlord that although you can non-renew a lease for any good reason, don't try to make something up to hide your discriminatory, unfair practices. If "just cause" can work in 80,000+ privately-owned apartments throughout Maryland, it can work everywhere – and bring a little more fairness and stability to families and neighborhoods. I urge you to vote Favorable on SB 644 to let counties and Baltimore City pass just cause eviction laws.

SB644_DanielleHerrmann_FAV (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Danielle Herrmann

Position: FAV

2/16/2024



Danielle Herrmann
Takoma Park/Silver Spring, MD 20912

TESTIMONY ON SB0644/HB477 - FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Danielle Herrmann, MSW, LCSW-C

My name is Danielle Herrmann and I am a resident of District 20. As a Maryland Medical Clinical Social Worker and an elderly member of Jews United for Justice, I am submitting this testimony in support of SB644/HB477, Local Just Cause Eviction enabling legislation. Jews United for Justice organizes over 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice.

Helping individuals and families navigate the challenges of living and taking action to advance the safety, dignity, and worth of every person, especially the most vulnerable among us, is a Jewish value. No one should live without a roof over their head, or the threat of landlord retaliation looming over them. Stories I have heard during my time as a Social Worker have furthered my belief in the importance of safe housing.

I made a promise to my pediatric hospice patient before she died that I would share her story of living with housing insecurity. Originally from Guatemala, her name translates to "Star of the Sea." At age 11, she was the sole surviving clinical trial patient of her NIH research cohort. Knowing she was going to die she proudly stated, "I'm contributing to medicine to help find a cure for other children." Her father was a laborer and her mother cared for her 24/7, while raising her younger sister. As a family, they were also grieving the stillborn death of her brother. Due to a water main pipe leak in their yard that their landlord refused to fix, they could not afford to pay rent along with the astronomical water bills the leak was causing. They lived in terror of landlord retaliation and the weaponization of eviction.

When I conducted home health and hospice visits across Central Maryland, I frequently encountered devastating stories like my patients'. I met renters whose landlords refused to make essential repairs. Tenants shared with me their fears and experiences of landlord retaliation, lease renewal denial, and eviction for having complained about the conditions they

were living in. I witnessed the palpable strain on adults and children facing unbearable housing insecurity. I heard innumerable accounts of the adverse ripple effects of eviction displacement, which devastated their health, emotional stability, and human dignity. I saw the inequitable impact on brown, Black, Indigenous and immigrant, Elderly, Disabled, and LGBTQIA+ individuals, households, and communities.

Just Cause Eviction laws will address these issues by providing essential remedies and safeguards for individuals, families, and those of us who advocate on their behalf. By promoting stable housing conditions, these laws strengthen neighborhood ties and community mental health. **I respectfully and strongly urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB644/HB477.**

HB477- Just Cause Eviction Enabling.pdf

Uploaded by: Daryl Yoder

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of District 44A. **I am testifying in support of HB477/SB644.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

HB477 allows local jurisdictions to require a just basis for landlords to either refuse to renew or to cut off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, limiting how and when lease non-renewals occur, requiring landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or requiring landlords to prove a just cause in court.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They have no choice but to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities. A 2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab found "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."¹ Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what's acceptable and when. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. Our partners at CASA recently reported that on November 22, 2023, seven residents of the Evergreen Terrace Apartments in Hyattsville, MD publicly denounced evictions that they believed were unjust, based on false evidence targeting immigrant and working class families.² In October 2023, the National Equity Atlas reported an estimated 98,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.³ Of those, 79% of tenants are people of color, including Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans. Crucially, 47% of those households include children, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown, and social scientists have documented declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction.⁴ People of color form less than half of this state's population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB477/SB644.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Daryl Yoder
309 Glenmore Ave.
Catonsville, MD 21228
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

² <https://wearecasa.org/tenants-at-evergreen-terrace-apartments-call-out-discriminatory-and-unjust-evict/>

³ <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

⁴ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondkimbro.evictions.fallout.sf2015_2.pdf

SB0644_DavidFriedman_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: David Friedman

Position: FAV

February 16, 2024
David M. Friedman
Silver Spring, MD 20905

TESTIMONY ON SB0644 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: David M. Friedman

My name is David Friedman. I am a resident of District 14 in Colesville/Cloverly. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0644, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

I am an active member of Oseh Shalom, a Jewish Reconstructionist congregation located in Laurel, MD. Jewish tradition emphasizes that every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe and stable home. One text particularly resonates with me - the prophet Isaiah understood that housing is more than a roof over one's head and that to deny a person safe housing is not only robbing them in the present but robbing their family for generations to come. As a long-time homeowner, I also appreciate the importance of housing stability and am concerned about the challenges that many renters face in Maryland's dynamic housing market. SB0644 would provide an important tool for both tenants and landlords and would place Maryland in step with [more than 15 states and jurisdictions](#) where just cause eviction has become the legal standard, including the District of Columbia, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Washington, Oregon, Philadelphia, and New York City.

This bill is particularly important to protect tenants from arbitrary, retaliatory, or discriminatory evictions, while not undermining legitimate business interests. Indeed, it adds to the toolbox that local jurisdictions in Maryland use to set a standard for responsible property management and assists in keeping families, workers, students, and seniors rooted in their communities. Crucially, SB0644 is an enabling measure, granting the authority, but not mandating, for Maryland counties and Baltimore to implement just cause eviction legislation that meets local needs.

In our dynamic housing market, Maryland's local jurisdictions should have all the tools they need to address the challenge of providing safe, fair, and affordable housing for residents. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0477.**

SB0644 favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Deedee Jacobsohn

Position: FAV

2/16/2024

Deedee Jacobsohn
North Bethesda, Maryland

**Testimony on SB0644—Position: Favorable
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local
Just Cause Termination Provisions**

My name is Deedee Jacobsohn and I am a resident of District 16 in Montgomery County. I am submitting this testimony **in support of SB0644: Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.**

I am a volunteer member of several organizations that are fighting for safe, secure, affordable housing in Montgomery County. I have heard many distressing stories from tenants experiencing housing insecurity. But the most infuriating stories were from immigrant women who were fighting for their communities and found themselves losing their homes when their landlords evicted them by not renewing their leases.

These women were doing amazing things—organizing food hubs, pushing for more outdoor lights and cameras to improve safety, collecting evidence of vermin and mold to force management to address the widespread unsanitary conditions in some buildings, and organizing other tenants to work together to improve their living conditions. Then they were forced out. I know of several who were unable to find affordable alternatives in the same communities. They thus lost their homes, their neighborhoods, and the support networks they had developed. This type of dislocation is devastating to the children who had to leave their schools; it is also detrimental to the community in general.

SB0644 would allow counties to enact “just cause” laws to prevent this type of retaliatory eviction, and provide greater security for tenants.

Everyone deserves to have a safe and stable home; it is a cornerstone of a healthy and flourishing community. But there can be no stability without protection from arbitrary or vindictive evictions by non-renewal of leases.

I respectfully urge the committee to **return a favorable report on SB0644.**

SB0644-JPR_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 644

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

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 16, 2024

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 644. The bill would authorize counties to establish laws preventing landlords from failing to renew or terminating leases without just cause.

Several counties have sought the authority from SB 644 to protect vulnerable constituents facing eviction for reasons outside of their control. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, evictions have received increased scrutiny as average household debt due to unpaid rent and volatility in the employment marketplace reached significantly elevated levels. SB 644 simply provides a tool for counties to prevent housing instability and inequity tailored to the needs of their respective communities.

Altogether, this bill provides county autonomy to address the housing needs of Marylanders continuing to face challenges even as the worst of the pandemic has abated. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 644 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

DRM SB0644 Just Cause Testimony - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: E.V. Yost

Position: FAV



Empowerment. Integration. Equality.

1500 Union Ave., Suite 2000, Baltimore, MD 21211

Phone: 410-727-6352 | Fax: 410-727-6389

www.DisabilityRightsMD.org

Disability Rights Maryland

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

Termination Provisions

Hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee

February 16, 2024 at 10:00am

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Dear Members of the Senate Committee,

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 644- Landlord and Tenant-Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies- Local Just Case Termination Provisions.

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the federally designated Protection & Advocacy agency¹ in Maryland mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. One of DRM's goals is to end the unnecessary segregation and institutionalization of Marylanders with disabilities. To that end, DRM's Housing and Community Inclusion team works to expand housing opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities and to maintain housing stability to ensure people with disabilities can participate fully in all aspects of community life, and have equal access to opportunities.

I am a Housing Advocate at Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), where I support clients who experience lease non-renewals and the resulting tenant holding over cases landlords file against them. Many of these individuals are Section 8 voucher holders whose landlords are not required to show "good cause" to non-renew at the end of the lease term, and therefore face the continual threat of displacement. Some of these individuals live in declining conditions, but if they speak out about these conditions, face the risk of receiving a non-renewal of their lease. I worked with one tenant, Mr. W., a Section 8 Voucher holder whose annual lease was not renewed due to the property management retaliating against him for complaining about a bug infestation to The Baltimore County Housing Authority. The bugs were starting to come into his unit and this was affecting his living conditions. The building was inspected in July and August of 2022 and it failed HQS inspection twice. His annual lease was supposed to be renewed in August, however, shortly after reporting the infestation to the Housing Authority, he received a letter from the property management stating that his lease was not going to be renewed and he needed to vacate his unit.

¹ For more information on Protection & Advocacy agencies, see NATIONAL DISABILITY RIGHTS NETWORK, <https://www.ndrn.org/> (last visited June 18, 2021).

Due to his disability and health conditions, Mr. W. was not able to move. DRM was able to negotiate a six month lease extension with his property management as a reasonable accommodation, but after six months, Mr. W. was still not able to find accessible housing or safely move due to his disabilities and health conditions and, his property management threatened legal action if he did not leave the unit. Eventually, with assistance from the Housing Authority, I helped Mr. W. find another accessible unit in The Baltimore County area, however, the stress of needing to move exacerbated his pre-existing health conditions and Mr. W. tragically died before being able to safely relocate to the new unit.

Mr. W.'s story is not uncommon. Like many of our clients, his disability and health conditions made moving difficult, if not impossible for him. The non-renewal of the lease was not for "good cause" as the property management could have simply dealt with the infestation at hand. Prior to reporting the infestation to the Housing Authority, Mr. W. had not violated the lease, he paid his rent on time, and did not participate in any illegal activities during his lease term. Mr. W. was threatened with eviction simply because he complained about the pest infestation impacting his health and he died from the stress of the attempting to move to avoid eviction.

It is important that this bill is pass as people with disabilities, like Mr. W., need to be able to remain in safe, accessible housing. If a "just cause" requirement for non-renewal of leases is enacted, landlords could not evict tenants as retaliation for exercising their rights. In the bill, there are several examples of "just cause" situations that would allow a landlord not to renew the lease. If Baltimore County had a "just cause" requirement for evictions in 2022, Mr. W. would not have been forced to move and might still be with us today, testifying himself in support of this bill. Maryland should ensure that people with disabilities continue to have stable, accessible housing, that their leases will be renewed unless the landlord shows good cause for non-renewal, and that they are not threatened with eviction as a holdover tenant, which this law would provide.

Thank you,

Sara Miller, Housing Advocate
Disability Rights Maryland
SaraM@DisabilityRightsMD.org

SB644 - Just Cause Eviction Enabling.pdf

Uploaded by: Erica Palmisano

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of 12A. **I am testifying in support of SB644.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

SB644 allows local jurisdictions to require a just basis for landlords to either refuse to renew or to cut off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, limiting how and when lease non-renewals occur, requiring landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or requiring landlords to prove a just cause in court.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They have no choice but to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities. A 2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab found “just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.”¹ Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed, contributing to their community.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. Our partners at CASA recently reported that on November 22, 2023, seven residents of the Evergreen Terrace Apartments in Hyattsville, MD publicly denounced evictions that they believed were unjust, based on false evidence targeting immigrant and working class families.² In October 2023, the National Equity Atlas reported an estimated 98,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.³ Of those, 79% of tenants are people of color, including Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans. Crucially, 47% of those households include children, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown, and social scientists have documented declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction.⁴ People of color form less than half of this state's population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children.

My partner and I are the landlords of a single property in Howard County, and that makes me a boogeyman. Last year when I testified, I heard large landlords send up the cry, "Think of the Mom & Pop landlords!"

I do not wish to be the boogeyman for this policy. Once in our 7 years, my partner and I made the tough decision to file an eviction. Had a just cause law been in place, we wouldn't have gotten stuck with forever tenants. We could have given a good reason. But no reason was needed, even though eviction impacts a tenant's housing, employment, and even their health for years. That didn't sit right with me. And it doesn't sit right that large landlords and their lobbyists will claim you have to protect me by keeping just cause eviction off the table for every jurisdiction in the state.

Those who summon the boogeyman have their reasons. In 2022, a study in the University of North Carolina journal "Social Forces"⁵ covering over 4 million property records around Boston found something pertinent. Large landlords filed 2-3 times as many evictions as small ones like me. They also filed when they were owed less money and even as a strategy to collect rent.

¹ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

² <https://wearecasa.org/tenants-at-evergreen-terrace-apartments-call-out-discriminatory-and-unjust-evict/>

³ <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

⁴ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondkimbro.evictions.fallout.sf2015_2.pdf

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soab063>

Small landlords, meanwhile, maintain closer relationships with tenants. We know eviction is and should be a last resort. We already make sure we have a solid reason before we file, so asking us to put that to paper is not the strenuous request our larger colleagues claim.

I have more faith in my fellow landlords than they have in me. I believe they can run their businesses while providing reasons for any evictions they must file. Our contracts already comply with laws protecting our interests and keeping tenants safe. Why not allow local jurisdictions to consider how to help tenants and communities thrive with just cause statutes?

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB644**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erica Palmisano

5580 Vantage Point Rd, Apt 5, Columbia, MD

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

MD Catholic Conference_SB 644_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 16, 2024

SB 644

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

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 644. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 644 authorizes a county to enact local laws or ordinances that prohibit a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease term or seeking to terminate a holdover tenancy without just cause.

Current Maryland law does not allow local legislatures to deciding how best to help their renters stay stably housed. As such, working individuals and their families face the threat of displacement even if they are up to date on rent and have adhered to all their lease's requirements. This legislation will help to boost the stability of the housing market by stabilizing families, neighborhoods, and communities to ensure our most vulnerable Marylanders remain housed.

Catholic teaching supports the right to private property but recognizes that communities and government have an obligation to ensure that housing needs of all are met, especially the poor and vulnerable members of our communities. Access to safe and affordable housing is a fundamental human right and this legislation represents a positive step toward achieving this goal.

With the ever-increasing price of housing and rent in particular, this bill might allow those in jeopardy of losing their housing some temporary relief. Accordingly, the Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 644.

sb644 Just Cause .pdf

Uploaded by: Gwen DuBois

Position: FAV



SB0644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

**Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,
Feb. 16, 2023 at 10 am**

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is part of Renters United Maryland and urges you to move favorably SB 644. SB 644 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. Local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. **Without SB 644, local efforts are stymied as Maryland families face more unstable housing, fears of retaliation and displacement.**

CPSR is the statewide organization with our 900 supporters. Our mission is to address the greatest public health threats of all: nuclear war and climate change, but we are also committed locally to addressing environmental injustice and health disparities. Health disparities may arise from problems with lack of employment, lack of educational opportunities, unhealthy environments, but nothing is more central to causing health disparities than housing insecurity. Evictions represent the worst outcome of housing insecurity, which includes high housing costs in proportion to income, poor housing quality, unstable neighborhood, overcrowding, and homelessness.¹

Prevention is the best medicine and there is evidence that “just cause” legislation reduces eviction filings and evictions.² In a study comparing 4 cities that did have Just Cause Laws and 4

¹ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-frm-asst-sec-111918.html>

² <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

cities that didn't in California, evictions and eviction filings were down significantly in the cities that did, compared to the cities that did not have such laws.

Eviction and eviction filings can have a negative impact on health. A recent review³ of the best designed studies looking at the harms from eviction filings and evictions on children from birth to age 9 found the following:

- 1) A recent eviction was associated with worse mother-reported child health status at age 5 years.
- 2) Evicted children had more hospitalizations and worse access to energy, health care, and childcare.
- 3) For a cohort of at risk 9-year-old children experiencing evictions in the preceding year, there was an association with cognitive losses compared to non-evicted children that were equivalent to the loss of one full year of schooling.
- 4) Evictions of pregnant women were associated with bad birth outcomes including premature birth and low birth weight.
- 5) A study in Cleveland found that by age 2, when there was an eviction filing history, there was a drop in lead testing and increase in lead levels compared to other children and even worse where there was actually an eviction.

Housing is health. Young children exposed to overcrowding and/or multiple moves in one year, were more often reported by their caregivers to have poor health, impaired educational, social or emotional skills, and were measured to have low weight compared to other children.⁴

In older children and adolescents, a history of multiple moves has been associated with mental health problems, substance abuse, increased behavior problems, poor school performance, and increased risk of teen pregnancy: negative outcomes which may handicap them in their adult lives.

SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state the reason for a non-renewal eviction boost helps families, neighborhoods, and communities.

CPSR is a member of the Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition of renters, organizers, and advocates, and **we urge the Committee's report of Favorable on SB 644.**

Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH President, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
gdubois@jhsph.edu

³ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2803667>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3134514/>

SB 644 - SUPP - JPR - Feb 16 - Good Cause Eviction

Uploaded by: Henry Bogdan

Position: FAV



marylandnonprofits.org

1500 Union Avenue | Suite 2500 | Baltimore, MD 21211
410.727.6367 | 800.273.6367 | Fax 410.235.2190

February 16, 2024

Testimony on Senate Bill 644
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies –
Local Just Cause Termination Provisions
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1800 nonprofit organizations and institutions across our State. The nonprofit community serves various needs of Maryland families suffering economic and social hardships. Housing instability is a major challenge for them, and a major hurdle to their economic self-sufficiency. We are asking you to support Senate Bill 644 to authorize local governments to enact “just cause” protections against non-renewal of residential leases.

Under Senate Bill 644 local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy that their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. **Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing and fears of retaliation and displacement.**

Maryland is currently a “no cause” state – that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew without any stated cause. This means that working families and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they pay their rent follow all the rules. They are under constant pressure to stay quiet and accept declining conditions, arbitrary policies, and increasing rents just to stay in their communities and keep their children in their local school. Or, they can speak up – on their own or as a group – and face a likely “non-renewal” at the end of their lease and displacement from their community.

This legislation is needed now! Maryland has seen a spike in the number of no-cause, evictions known as “Tenant Holding Over” evictions— a 117% increase in average Tenant Holding Over complaint filings each month since 2020. This mirrors a national trend in which “[n]early half of U.S. renter households reported experiencing significant pressure to move during the previous 6 months.”¹ **In addition to increasing rents and fewer market options, Maryland families face the specter of non-renewal and displacement now more than ever.**

¹ HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings From New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (based on June-Aug. 2023 data).



"Just cause" eviction prevention addresses this uncertainty by providing that a landlord must disclose the reason for choosing not to renew. SB 644 provides a list of options for what "just cause," as adopted by a county, could include, such as substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. Requiring landlords to disclose the reason for a lease non-renewal helps ensure that no eviction takes place under a cover of silence that can hide discriminatory intent. SB 644's list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted. To be clear, this is a list that localities are free to adopt or change to meet local housing needs.

Since 2008, just cause eviction legislation has been introduced 9 times – including multiple statewide bills, as well as bills specific to Prince George's County and Montgomery County. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency's end. These efforts demonstrate a sustained desire in Maryland localities for the authority to enact just cause.

At least 5 states, the District of Columbia (since 1985), and 16 localities including Philadelphia (since 2018) have adopted just cause eviction laws. New Jersey's just cause law (since 1974) demonstrates that the benefit of just cause far outweighs the hypothetical that it hurts development. ["Something in the Garden State is clearly working. According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding."](#)

Additionally, looking at 4 localities in California, a [2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab](#) study finds that "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."

SB 644 recognizes that numerous counties in Maryland want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state a legitimate reason for an eviction through lease non-renewal eviction boosts the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities.

We urge you to give Senate Bill 644 a FAVORABLE REPORT.

SB644 - Just Cause Eviction Enabling (updated 2_6_

Uploaded by: Holly Powell

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of **District 46. I am testifying in support of SB644.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

SB644 allows local jurisdictions to require a just basis for landlords to either refuse to renew or to cut off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, limiting how and when lease non-renewals occur, requiring landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or requiring landlords to prove a just cause in court.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They have no choice but to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities. A 2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab found “just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.”¹ Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what’s acceptable and when. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. Our partners at CASA recently reported that on November 22, 2023, seven residents of the Evergreen Terrace Apartments in Hyattsville, MD publicly denounced evictions that they believed were unjust, based on false evidence targeting immigrant and working class families.² In October 2023, the National Equity Atlas reported an estimated 98,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.³ Of those, 79% of tenants are people of color, including Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans. Crucially, 47% of those households include children, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown, and social scientists have documented declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction.⁴ People of color form less than half of this state’s population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB644.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

¹ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

² <https://wearecasa.org/tenants-at-evergreen-terrace-apartments-call-out-discriminatory-and-unjust-evict/>

³ <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

⁴ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondkimbro.evictions.fallout.sf2015_2.pdf

Sincerely,

Holly Powell

2308 Cambridge Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

Just Cause Eviction SB644 15FEB 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Jan Kleinman

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of District 40. Although my house is in D40, we suffered fire damage there, so are renting temporarily while our house is repaired. As a renter, I feel keenly the justice of this bill. Can you imagine being forced out of your residence for no clear reason? It would feel disruptive, inconvenient, and unfair. **I am testifying in support of SB644.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

SB644 allows local jurisdictions to require a just basis for landlords to either refuse to renew or to cut off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, limiting how and when lease non-renewals occur, requiring landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or requiring landlords to prove a just cause in court.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They have no choice but to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities. A 2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab found “just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.”¹ Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what's acceptable and when. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. Our partners at CASA recently reported that on November 22, 2023, seven residents of the Evergreen Terrace Apartments in Hyattsville, MD publicly denounced evictions that they believed were unjust, based on false evidence targeting immigrant and working class families.² In October 2023, the National Equity Atlas reported an estimated 98,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.³ Of those, 79% of tenants are people of color, including Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans. Crucially, 47% of those households include children, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown. Social scientists have documented declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction.⁴ People of color form less than half of this state's population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially the lifelong detriments suffered by children.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB644.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jan Kleinman
816 Union Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21211
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

² <https://wearecasa.org/tenants-at-evergreen-terrace-apartments-call-out-discriminatory-and-unjust-evict/>

³ <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

⁴ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondkimbro.evictions.fallout.sf2015_2.pdf

SB0644_Jeffrey Rubin_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeffrey Rubin

Position: FAV

February 16, 2024

Jeffrey S. Rubin
Potomac, MD 20854

TESTIMONY ON SB0644 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
**Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local
Just Cause Termination Provisions**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Jeffrey S. Rubin

My name is Jeffrey Rubin. I am a resident of District 15. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0644, Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

The home is a focal point for a web of social interactions that includes friends, neighbors, schools, and other civic institutions. It follows that individuals, their families, and entire communities fall apart as a result of eviction. For years, eviction has been a significant problem in Montgomery County, as well as other jurisdictions across our state, and it remains a serious concern as tenants face ongoing housing shortages and rising rents.

SB0644 is designed to allow local jurisdictions to choose to enact protections for tenants, while respecting the needs and rights of the landlord. It outlines an array of circumstances that justify a landlord's decision not to renew the lease of a renter. These conditions could include various contractual obligations to the landlord and specific provisions that allow the landlord to make other use of the property. However, it does not permit the landlord to displace renters in the absence of a just cause.

This has become an even more pressing issue in jurisdictions like Montgomery County that have adopted a policy of rent stabilization. Some landlords may be tempted not to renew a tenant's lease as a way to circumvent the rent stabilization policies. Unfortunately, there also are instances when landlords choose not to renew a lease to rid themselves of residents who ask for repairs of unhealthy, substandard housing.

In recent years, supermajorities of the Montgomery County Council and the Montgomery County Annapolis Delegation have supported just cause legislation. However, the Maryland General Assembly has ignored this mandate from County representatives. SB0644 overcomes this impasse by enabling local jurisdictions to determine the fate of such legislation.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0644.pdf

Uploaded by: Jenn Aiosa

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JENNIFER AIOSA
Director of Government Affairs

AMANDA KONTZ CARR
Legislative Officer

WILLIAM J. THORNE
Legislative Associate

BILL NO.: **SB 644**

TITLE: **Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover
Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions**

SPONSOR: **Senator Muse**

COMMITTEE: **Judicial Proceedings**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: **February 16, 2024**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 644 – Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions. This legislation would enable Counties to pass local legislation that would prevent landlords from terminating or failing to renew leases without just cause.

SB 644 outlines certain grounds for eviction and establishes just cause eviction protections. These types of protections have been put into place in a number of other States and jurisdictions, including New Jersey, New Hampshire, the City of Philadelphia, and the District of Columbia. Baltimore City passed local just cause legislation in 2021 but has not been able to implement due to preemption until the State provides such authority. The legislation does not require counties to enact local legislation, and allows those that do flexibility to define “just cause” in a manner that is appropriate for the jurisdiction. Establishing just cause locally will create an additional layer of protection for tenants from being unexpectedly displaced from their current housing. It is imperative that in the face of the current housing crisis the State of Maryland and County governments are collaborating in multiple ways to keep residents housed.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a FAVORABLE report on SB 644 from the Senate Judicial Proceedings committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB 644_JoShifrin_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jo Shifrin

Position: FAV

SB 644_JoShifrin_FAV
Hearing Date: February 16, 2024
Jo Shifrin
Bethesda, MD 20817

Testimony for SB 644 - Position: FAVORABLE
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover
Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

To: Senator Will Smith, Chair, and Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Jo Shifrin

My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 644, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

I am a Jew and a resident of Montgomery County for the past 10 years. My support for this legislation comes from my grounding in Jewish values and my training in public health. Judaism offers a moral framework: make the world a more fair and equitable place and help everyone receive what they need to live a safe and healthy life. From a public health perspective, housing is a basic human right without which people can be harmed both psychologically and physically. The loss of a home can result in a variety of harms including the potential loss of employment, the interruption of children's education, and the loss of personal property.

Allowing the passage of this bill will not prevent a landlord from evicting a tenant who doesn't pay rent, damages the property, engages in unlawful or disruptive activities, or in other "just causes." But it will protect good tenants who pay their rent, prevent their rental unit from being damaged, and who are good neighbors. It is only meant to prevent landlords from evicting tenants who have annoyed the landlord by asking for repairs to the rental property, and/or because the landlord

believes that by getting new tenants, he/she/they will be able to significantly raise the rent on the rental unit.

SB 644 would make it difficult for landlords to evict good tenants who deserve to be able to remain in their homes. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 644.**

SB644_SUPPORT_ShoreLegalAccess_2-16-24_Final.pdf

Uploaded by: Julia Jester

Position: FAV



SB644: LANDLORD AND TENANT – RESIDENTIAL LEASES AND HOLDOVER TENANCIES – LOCAL JUST CAUSE TERMINATION PROVISIONS

HEARING BEFORE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE
2/16/2024

Connecting Individuals and Families who need Civil Legal Services with Volunteer Attorneys and Community Resources

POSITION: SUPPORT

Shore Legal Access, Inc. (formerly Mid-Shore Pro Bono) supports SB635. This bill would significantly improve housing stability, particularly in a housing-scarce area like the Eastern Shore. Localities that enact just cause termination provisions afforded by this measure will be able to provide tenants with a sense of security in their housing situation and prevent homelessness.

Shore Legal Access (SLA) connects people on the Eastern Shore with limited financial means to legal representation and essential community resources. Each year, SLA helps over 3,000 people in our community access the legal system when they would otherwise be shut out. Our small legal team and network of volunteer lawyers provide free legal services for life planning, family law, landlord/tenant, foreclosure, and consumer debt. These services help families gain financial and housing stability and create safe, secure homes for children.

With limited housing resources available in our area, Shore Legal Access works diligently to keep tenants in their homes. We often encounter clients who are facing lease and holdover terminations and struggle to find alternative housing. Many of the tenants we work with in these scenarios have been renting a unit for many years and receive a termination with no explanation. In many instances, these situations evolve into Tenant Holding Over matters to be handled in the Courts. The filing of these matters stacks the odds against the tenant and further threatens their ability to secure housing. Rarely do the tenants remain in their homes to be spiteful or stubborn, but rather simply because they have nowhere else to go. For many, their only alternative is homelessness. Giving localities the power to enact just cause provisions not only affords housing security for families, but continues to hold tenants accountable for regular rent payments and to abide by the terms of their lease.

Princeton’s Eviction Lab¹ finds that “just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates.” Not only does this bill provide for housing security in the present moment, but also the opportunity to positively impact future housing security by reducing eviction filings against tenants.

For these reasons, Shore Legal Access supports SB644 and we urge the Committee’s support for this bill. If enacted, I fully intend to engage with my local legislatures to establish just cause termination ordinances in jurisdictions across the Eastern Shore. If you have any questions regarding our position on this bill, please contact Julia Jester, Housing Case Manager, at 410-690-8128 or julia@shorelegal.org.

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WWW.SHORELEGAL.ORG

1. <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

SB 644_Consumer Protection Division_Support_2024.p

Uploaded by: Kira Wilpone-Welborn

Position: FAV

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WILLIAM D. GRUHN
Chief
Consumer Protection Division

Writer's Direct Dial No.
410-576-6986
kwilponewelborn@oag.state.md.us

February 15, 2024

To: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn, Assistant Attorney General
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 644 – Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies -
Local Just Cause Termination Provisions (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports Senate Bill 644 sponsored by Senators Muse, Carter, and Sydnor. Presently, pursuant to Real Property Article § 8-402, a landlord can elect to not renew a tenancy for any reason at the end of a residential lease term. Senate Bill 644 seeks to permit local jurisdictions the freedom to adopt local “just cause” policies that would require a landlord to have good cause before electing not to renew a tenancy and displacing the tenant from the rental unit and the community.

Just cause requirements for lease non-renewal reduce unexpected displacements, providing tenants with security in their residences and communities and allowing tenants to avoid financially expensive disruptions in their living, working, and schooling. As a result, the American Bar Association in its eviction policy guidelines has recognized the importance of just cause in eviction legislation and recommended that all states and localities adopt just cause principals in their residential lease and eviction laws.¹

¹ See https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_aid_indigent_defense/sclaid-task-force-on-eviction--housing-stability--and-equity/guidelines-eviction/guideline-9/.

Senate Bill 644 is tailored to permit local jurisdictions the flexibility to adopt housing policies that are beneficial to their residents and communities. For these reasons, the Division requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 644 a favorable report.

cc: The Honorable C. Anthony Muse
The Honorable Jill P. Carter
The Honorable Charles E. Sydnor, III
Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB0644_JCRC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Salganik

Position: FAV



Date of Hearing: February 16, 2024

Betsy Singer, Columbia, MD 21044, 443-812-2525
Laura Salganik, Columbia, MD 21044, 301-221-5143

TESTIMONY ON SB0644 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Senator Will Smith, Vice Chair Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Howard County, Betsy Singer and Laura Salganik, Co-chairs

The JCRC is submitting this testimony in support of SB0644, Just Cause Termination.

Ancient Jewish texts are full of laws about keeping homes safe for the people who live in them. The prophet Micah understood that housing is more than a roof over one's head and that to deny a person safe housing is not only robbing them in the present but also robbing their family for generations to come.

Landlords often retaliate against tenants who organize for their rights, demand that repairs be made, or complain about violations of laws about safe housing conditions. Sometimes this retaliation takes the form of refusing to renew their leases. "Just cause" laws protect tenants from this kind of retaliation, and from being evicted for no reason at all. These laws promote housing stability for tenants and neighborhoods.

It is important to recognize that this bill gives locals the right to set these requirements. It doesn't change anything at the state level. This bill would allow counties to adopt "just cause" laws that meet local needs to require landlords to renew residential leases unless they have a "just cause" to terminate the lease such as wanting to occupy the property themselves, having a close relative move in, taking the property off the market, and tenant breach of lease.

At the statehouse last week, there was a group of renters who were desperately worried about their security and the risk of eviction for no or little cause. You need to hear their stories and be responsible for their needs just as you look after the needs of landlords.

We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.

SB0644_CC_Martinez_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Madelin Martinez

Position: FAV

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.¹ 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.^{2,3} The National Center on Family Homelessness estimates that the graduation rate of children experiencing homelessness is less than 25%.⁴ 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).

SB 644 - MoCo_Elrich_FAV (GA 24).pdf

Uploaded by: Marc Elrich

Position: FAV



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

February 16, 2024

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: Senate Bill 644, *Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions*

Senate Bill 644 authorizes a county to adopt by local law or ordinance provisions prohibiting a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease or from terminating a holdover tenancy without just cause. Under the bill, just cause exists if: (1) a tenant has committed a substantial breach of the lease or substantial damage to the leased premises or another area of the property and after receiving notice to cure or correct the breach or pay the cost of repair, the tenant fails to comply within a reasonable period of time established by the local law or ordinance; (2) after receiving notice, a tenant fails to cease disorderly conduct that disturbs the peace and quiet of other tenants within a reasonable period established by the local law or ordinance; (3) a tenant has engaged in illegal activity on the leased premises, another area of the property, or on a public right of way abutting the leased premises; (4) a tenant, without reasonable cause, refuses to grant the landlord access to the leased premises for repairs, improvements or inspection of the leased premises; (5) a landlord, in good faith, seeks to recover possession of the premises for use by the landlord or a family member; and (6) a landlord, in good faith, seeks to remove the leased premises from the rental market.

I strongly support this bill, which helps protect tenants and enables them to stay in their homes while also allowing termination of leases for certain causes. Under Montgomery County law, a landlord must provide 60 days' notice if the landlord does not intend to offer the existing tenant a renewed lease term. If a tenant remains in possession of the leased premises after the expiration of the lease term, the tenant is considered to be "holding over" under current State law. If a tenant holds over, the tenant becomes a month-to-month tenant, but all other terms of the expired lease remain in effect (albeit monthly). A landlord may file a complaint in District Court if a tenant refuses to relinquish possession at the end of the lease term. If the landlord proves proper notice, the lease term fully expires, and the tenant remains in possession of the premises, the Court will issue a judgment for possession in favor of the landlord.

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.

Re: Senate Bill 644

February 16, 2024

Senate Bill 644 makes significant changes to the tenant holding over process in Montgomery County. A landlord will no longer be able to evict a tenant for holding over, absent an enumerated just cause. Under the bill, a tenant could continue to stay in possession of the property indefinitely after expiration of the lease, as a month-to-month tenant, subject to eviction for just cause if the tenant continues to pay the required rent.

I support Senate Bill 644 and recognize the importance of providing tenants with housing stability and security through strengthening the protections available to tenants. I believe that just cause eviction requirements are yet another way that Montgomery County can provide housing security to its residents. For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request a favorable Committee report.

cc: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 644_MAP_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Huffman

Position: FAV



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

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: kschumitz@mdeconomy.org

Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

P: (301) 776-0442 x1033

E: MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org

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.

SB644_Mark Martin_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Martin

Position: FAV

SB644_MarkMartin_FAV

February 16, 2024

Mark Martin

1416 Bolton Street, Baltimore, MD 21217

TESTIMONY ON SB644 – POSITION: FAVORABLE (Landlord and Tenant-Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies-Local Just Cause Termination Provisions)

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Mark Martin

My name is Mark Martin and I am a longtime resident of District 40 in Baltimore City. This testimony is in support of SB644.

Stable housing is critical for a healthy, prosperous, and safe community. Maryland law currently works against this goal by leaving tenants vulnerable to losing their homes through no fault of their own just because their landlord refuses to renew their lease. Lease nonrenewals (evictions) undermine family and neighborhood stability and threaten the health and education of children, particularly people of color. Further, evictions cost governments substantial amounts of money, as uprooted tenants are forced to draw more heavily on public services. The problem is only getting worse: lease nonrenewals are on the rise, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

SB644 begins to rectify this problem. It authorizes counties, and Baltimore City, to enact locally appropriate laws that would require a landlord to renew a lease unless he has a valid reason (a “just cause”) not to. The bill therefore promises to do a great deal of good by redressing the power imbalance between landlords and tenants, safeguarding tenants from arbitrary and retaliatory evictions, and, thereby, facilitating access to stable and habitable housing and all the individual and societal benefits associated with it.

At the same time, the bill should protect the *legitimate* interests of landlords. Just cause eviction laws typically leave landlords free not to renew the leases of problem tenants (e.g., those who fail to pay rent, cause damage, or are disruptive), to reasonably raise rents, or to dispossess tenants in order to remove a property from the rental market, to take it back for temporary personal use, or renovate it

This is a proven path. I am a (retired) lawyer with experience in Landlord-Tenant court in the District of Columbia, which provides tenants with a right to just cause eviction. DC's law has not caused the sky to fall on the DC rental market or DC landlords. To the contrary. Many other states (e.g., New Jersey, California, Oregon, New Hampshire, and Washington) and cities (e.g., Seattle, Oakland, Boston, and Philadelphia) afford similar protections to tenants, which have generally had the effect of reducing evictions without undermining the housing market. Baltimore City itself adopted such a law in 2021, but has been blocked from implementing it by contrary State law.

It is time for Maryland to join these other jurisdictions. SB644 would add much needed balance to State law. The reforms it enables are a commonsense, workable step to helping tenants stay in their homes, and thereby reduce social dislocation and promote equality, without jeopardizing landlords' reasonable interests.

I urge the committee to return a favorable report on SB644.

SB 644 Just Cause Enabling Public Justice FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Hill

Position: FAV



C. Matthew Hill
Attorney
Public Justice Center
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SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Feb. 16, 2024

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Public Justice Center is part of Renters United Maryland and urges you to move favorable on SB 644. SB 644 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. That means local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy that their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. **Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing and fears of retaliation and displacement.**

Public Justice Center (PJC) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that assists over 800 renters and their families each year. We stand with tenants to protect and expand their rights to safe, habitable, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing. PJC seeks the Committee’s Favorable report on SB 644.

American Bar Association Supports “Just Cause” Eviction Policy

In 2022, the American Bar Association (ABA) endorsed “just cause eviction” policies as one of [“Ten Guidelines for Residential Eviction Laws.”](#) As reported in the ABA resolution:

When such good cause requirements are absent renters and their families lack basic security of tenure. Forcing a household to relocate imposes significant disruption and potential hardship on the tenant, and should not be allowed without a legitimate reason. Allowing eviction without cause invites abuse, enabling a discriminatory, retaliatory, or otherwise illegitimate motive for ending a tenancy to be easily concealed behind a “no cause” eviction.

American Bar Association, House of Delegates Resolution 612, 9-10. The ABA urges all federal, state, local governmental bodies to implement “just cause eviction” as part of the Ten Guidelines for Residential Eviction Laws.

What is “just cause” policy and why is it needed? Maryland is currently a “no cause” state – that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew without any stated cause. This means that working families and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They are under constant pressure to stay quiet and accept declining conditions, arbitrary policies, and increasing rents just to stay in their communities and keep their children in their local school. Or, they can speak up – on their own or as a group – and face a likely “non-renewal” at the end of their lease and displacement from their community.

Why this legislation now? **Maryland has seen a spike in the number of no-cause, evictions known as “Tenant Holding Over” evictions– a 117% increase in average Tenant Holding Over complaint filings each month since 2020.** This mirrors a national trend in which “[n]early half of U.S. renter households reported experiencing significant pressure to move during the previous 6 months.”¹ **In addition to increasing rents and fewer market options, Maryland families face the specter of non-renewal and displacement now more than ever.**

“Just cause” addresses this uncertainty by providing that a landlord must disclose the reason for choosing not to renew. SB 644 provides a list of options for what “just cause,” as adopted by a county, may include, such as substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. Requiring landlords to disclose the reason for a lease non-renewal helps ensure that no eviction takes place under a cover of silence that can hide discriminatory intent. SB 644’s list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted. To be clear, this is a list that localities are free to adopt or change to meet local housing needs.

Will Just Cause Eviction Drive Up Landlord Litigation Costs? No. If a tenant refuses to vacate after the landlord gives the tenant a notice, then the landlord has to go to court **regardless** and file a Tenant Holding Over complaint. Just cause eviction law does not change this at all. With just cause eviction law, though, the landlord will have to *state the reason why* they want the tenant to vacate. This transparency encourages tenants to speak up about defective housing conditions and organize with their neighbors without fear of arbitrary

¹ HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings From New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (June-Aug. 2023 data).

or discriminatory non-renewal. Additionally, Lease Non-renewal Evictions (also called “Tenant Holding Over”) account for about 4,000 eviction warrants/year. This is a tiny number of renter households compared to the 400,000+ Failure to Pay Rent evictions or 750,000+ renter households. The impact of just cause eviction is minimal overall for landlords.

Why a Local Enabling bill? Since 2008, just cause eviction legislation has been introduced 9 times – including multiple statewide bills, as well as bills specific to Prince George’s County and Montgomery County. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency’s end. These efforts demonstrate a sustained desire in Maryland localities for the authority to enact just cause.

Based on available research, **Maryland is one of only 6 states in the country that preempts localities from enacting just cause eviction policies.** Other states at least allow localities to pass their own just cause eviction laws. Pennsylvania is a good example. It has allowed Philadelphia to pass a just cause eviction law to promote greater housing stability. If this body has concerns about just cause eviction policy, it should allow localities to see what works best for their housing market and policy goals. At least 5 states, the District of Columbia (since 1985), and 16 localities including Philadelphia (since 2018) have adopted just cause eviction laws. New Jersey’s just cause law (since 1974) demonstrates that the benefit of just cause far outweighs the hypothetical that it hurts development. [“Something in the Garden State is clearly working. According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding.”](#)

Additionally, looking at 4 localities in California, a [2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab](#) study finds that “just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.”

SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state a legitimate reason for an eviction through lease non-renewal eviction boosts the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Public Justice Center is a member of Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition of renters, organizers, and advocates, and **we urge the Committee's report of Favorable on SB 644.**

SB0644_EnterpriseBondi_FAV_Feb2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Melissa Bondi

Position: FAV



**SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies
Local Just Cause Termination Provisions**

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Feb. 16, 2024

Position: Favorable

submitted via electronic transmission
February 15, 2024

To All Members of the Committee:

I am writing today on behalf of Enterprise Community Partners (Enterprise) **to urge you to move favorable on HB 477**. HB 477 is enabling legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. That means local policymakers would be able to determine the kind of “just cause” policy that their locality needs, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing and fears of retaliation and displacement.

We especially thank Senators Muse, Carter, and Sydnor and Delegates Wilkins and Stewart (companion bill HB477) for their leadership in sponsoring this important legislation.

About Enterprise:

Founded 40 years ago here in Maryland, Enterprise is committed to make home and community places of pride, power and belonging, and platforms for resilience and upward mobility for all.

Our impact and investment in Maryland housing and affordability is one measure of our commitment to the state and its residents. Enterprise’s affordable housing production, preservation, and rehabilitation efforts total more than \$1 billion in total portfolio value, including 76 apartment communities and more than 7,500 homes in Maryland. Our work is centered on holistic resident services and environmentally sustainable design, construction and operations.

In addition, we provide millions of dollars each year in loan financing, equity investments and grants to nonprofit and mission-minded community organizations, as well as technical assistance, partnerships, and a variety of federal, state, and local policy analysis.

Enterprise brings substantial first-hand experience of the vital role the state’s housing and community development programs play in meeting community needs.

ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY PARTNERS, INC.

Washington, DC Office: 10 G Street NE ■ Suite 580 ■ Washington, DC 20002 ■ 202.842.9190 ■

www.EnterpriseCommunity.org

We are also a proud signatory of the [Purple Line Corridor Community Development Agreement](#), and actively work in coalition with a variety of cross-sector stakeholders, including tenant and landlord interests, to prevent displacement, support greater housing affordability, and overall increased health and quality of life for residents along the corridor. Many Purple Line residents are under threat of displacement, and more have been displaced at least once while trying to remain members of their local communities. The financial, emotional, logistical, and long-reaching costs of involuntary displacement on households are described later in this testimony.

[The Purple Line’s Housing Action Plan 2023-2027](#) includes explicit support for stronger legal protections for renters (p29) and cites Just Cause Eviction as one example of those protections, for both Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties.

About Just Cause:

Maryland is currently a "no cause" state – that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew without any stated cause. This means that working families and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They are under constant pressure to stay quiet and accept declining conditions, arbitrary policies, and increasing rents just to stay in their communities and keep their children in their local school. Or, they can speak up – on their own or as a group – and face a likely “non-renewal” at the end of their lease and displacement from their community.

Unfortunately, Maryland has seen a spike in the number of no-cause, evictions known as “Tenant Holding Over” evictions– a 117% increase in average Tenant Holding Over complaint filings each month since 2020. This mirrors a national trend in which “[n]early half of U.S. renter households reported experiencing significant pressure to move during the previous 6 months.”¹ In addition to increasing rents and fewer market options, Maryland renters face the increased uncertainty of involuntary displacement, causing additional household costs to move, and negative impacts on work commutes, access to schools, and instability in their housing record, which can impact credit access and consideration on future rental applications.

One proven way to minimize this uncertainty is through establishing Just Cause provisions. Just Cause articulates that a landlord must disclose the reason for choosing not to renew. HB477 does not limit or constrain landlords who have legitimate reasons for non-renewals. It offers a list of options for what “just cause” may include and gives that ultimate authority to localities to decide. Common Just Cause provisions may include substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. Requiring landlords to disclose the reason for a lease non-renewal helps ensure that no eviction takes place under the cover of discriminatory intent. HB 477’s list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted.

HB477’s approach to allowing localities to control ultimate Just Cause decisions is important to understand in context. As you may recall, since 2008 legislation to establish just cause eviction has been introduced 9 times – including multiple statewide bills, as well as bills specific to Prince George’s County and Montgomery County.

¹ HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings From New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (based on June-Aug. 2023 data).

During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency's end. Most tenant landlord affairs in Maryland are decided at the local level; we agree that localities should have the right to establish Just Cause conditions as part of their overall approach to addressing strong rental housing protections and authorities in consultation with stakeholders.

At least 5 states, the District of Columbia (since 1985), and 16 localities including Philadelphia (since 2018) have adopted just cause eviction laws. New Jersey's just cause law (since 1974) demonstrates that the benefit of just cause far outweighs the hypothetical that it hurts development. ["Something in the Garden State is clearly working. According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding."](#)

As well a [2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab](#) study of four California jurisdictions found that "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."

HB 477 recognizes that local legislatures want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state a legitimate reason for an eviction through lease non-renewal eviction boosts the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities. It also streamlines court processes and reduces eviction filings that may be filed for arbitrary reasons against tenants who are otherwise obeying all terms of their lease and the law.

Our team would be happy to answer any questions you may have about our work in Maryland, and we appreciate your consideration of these views. On behalf of Enterprise Community Partners, we urge you to move favorable on Just Cause Eviction legislation.

Respectfully submitted:

Melissa Bondi
Mid-Atlantic State & Local Policy Director

Cc: Rev. David C. Bowers, Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Market Leader
Sheila Somashekar, Director, Purple Line Corridor Coalition

Testimony of Montgomery County Young Democrats in

Uploaded by: Michael DeLong

Position: FAV



Testimony of Montgomery County Young Democrats in Support of SB 644–Landlord and Tenant–Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies–Local Just Cause Termination Provisions–Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 13th, 2024

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Montgomery County Young Democrats (MCYD) urge your support for [SB 644](#)–Landlord and Tenant-Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies–Local Just Cause Termination Provisions. This bill would allow Maryland counties to adopt local laws or ordinances prohibiting landlords from failing to renew leases or from evicting renters without just cause. SB 644 will provide renters with badly needed protections, promote housing stability and reduce evictions, and ensure more people have places to live.

MCYD is a group of young Democrats ages 14-35 who offer a voice for young people who live, work, or go to school in Montgomery County. We work to improve our county and state, and encourage young people to get involved in politics and advocacy. Since many of our members are renters, a just cause eviction bill will especially help them.

Every person, regardless of their age, race, or income, should have a safe and stable home. However, some landlords believe that their own profits are more important than the safety of their renters, and so they either let the buildings they own fall into disrepair or evict people out into the street in order to squeeze more money out of other renters. To make matters worse, landlords often retaliate against renters who organize for their

rights, who demand that necessary repairs be made to their living spaces, or who complain about violations of laws about safe housing conditions.

Just cause eviction laws protect renters from this retaliation and from being evicted for no reason at all. They promote housing stability and ensure that evictions and nonrenewals of leases have a firm basis, instead of just being dependent on the whims of landlords.

Maryland housing is quite expensive and many areas are facing a housing crisis. When a lease is not renewed, Maryland renters frequently find it difficult to find a new place to rent. They may have to pay substantially higher amounts, or move into substandard quarters, or in the worst cases, couchsurf with friends, move into a shelter, or live on the street. And getting evicted is deeply traumatizing and harmful to renters; they often lose their possessions and afterward find it difficult or even impossible to obtain new housing.

SB 644 will protect renters from abuses and help build a Maryland where everyone has a safe place to live. The bill gives counties the power to prohibit landlords from not renewing leases or from evicting people without just cause. Just cause includes the following reasons:

- 1) Renters committing substantial breaches of the lease or causing substantial damage to the property;
- 2) Renters failing to stop disorderly conduct that disturbs the peace and quiet of other renters;
- 3) Renters engaging in illegal activity on the property;
- 4) Renters refusing to grant the landlord access to the property for the purpose of inspecting or making needed repairs, without good reason;
- 5) Landlords seeking to recover the property for their own use or the use of their family; and
- 6) Landlords seeking to permanently remove the property from the rental market.

This bill includes sufficient causes so landlords can make a living but also allows for substantial protection of renters, if counties so choose. We urge your support for SB 644.

Please contact us at mocoyoungdems@gmail.com with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Montgomery County Young Democrats

SB644 Local Just Cause Termination Provisions - Go

Uploaded by: Michael English

Position: FAV

SB 644 Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, Feb 16, 2023

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Thank you for agreeing to hear my testimony,

My name is Mike English, I live in downtown Silver Spring and I am here to speak strongly in support of this just cause enabling legislation, and I say this as someone who spends just as much, if not more time advocating for the production of more housing as I do pushing for renter protections.

While I'm speaking only in my personal capacity today, I'm involved with multiple organizations that push to make housing production easier, more predictable, and more affordable, and have written numerous pro housing, urbanist opinion pieces for various publications. I've also been called a developer shill, or something to that effect, enough times in enough meetings about proposed apartment complexes or zoning changes that I've quite literally lost count.

I bring all this up only to say that while there is such a thing as a renter protection that can go "too far" and do more harm than good in the long run by limiting the supply of housing Just cause eviction isn't one of them. I, and most other "YIMBYs" and YIMBY organizations either don't spend much time worrying about just cause, or actively support it, because it works well in tandem with abundant housing to provide leverage and stability to renters.

This law would not prevent a landlord from not renewing a lease for a tenant that fails to pay, violates the lease, or meets other "just causes" for non renewal, and landlords would still be able to deny renewal if they, for example, wanted to take the home off the rental market altogether. It is not a "lease for life" as some allege.

All it means is this. "If you are going to continue to rent the home out, the person currently renting it gets the first shot at renting it, unless you have a compelling reason not to offer it to them."

That's unambiguously good. Yes, housing is a market, and market principles apply, but it is also a, well, home, a place that is meant to be a relative constant in our lives that, while it may not last forever, does not change suddenly for no good reason.

That's all we're talking about here.

Development won't crater, and problem tenants won't be forever entrenched in a home. It *will* help prevent tenants being removed for retaliatory reasons, such as forming a tenants union or making consistent maintenance requests, and more generally help to give a little certainty that their safe harbor will stay their safe harbor.

SB 644– Just Cause.pdf

Uploaded by: NaShona Kess

Position: FAV



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

**SB 644 – Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause
Judiciary Proceedings
Position: Favorable**

February 16, 2024

The Honorable Senator Smith, Chair
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Honorable Senator Smith and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland State Conference of the NAACP. We support Senate Bill 644, Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause, which is currently before the Environment and Transportation Committee. We ask that all members of the committee support this very important legislation that provides enables legislation that would give authority to Maryland counties, including Baltimore City, to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals.

This legislation introduced by Senators Muse, Carter and Sydnor will allow policy makers the ability to determine “just cause” policies that may be needed in their localities. Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing and fears of retaliation and displacement.

Currently, Maryland is a “no cause” state which allows landlord to non-renew without any stated cause. Working families and their children may face the threat of displacement, even when they follow the rules. Landlords create arbitrary policies and tenants face increasing rents that are required to stay in their communities and keep their children in their local school. When tenants speak up, they face a likely “non-renewal” at the end of their lease and displacement from their community.

Research demonstrates that Maryland has seen a spike in many “no-cause”, evictions, known as “Tenant Holding Over” evictions– a 117% increase in average Tenant Holding Over complaint filings each month since 2020. “Nearly half of the U.S. renter households reported experiencing significant pressure to move during the previous 6 months.” HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings From New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (based on June-Aug. 2023 data). HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, “Pressure to Move and Forced Moves Among U.S. Renter Households: Findings from New Questions in the Household Pulse Survey” (Sept. 19, 2023) (based on June-Aug. 2023 data).

Since 2008, just cause eviction legislation has been introduced 9 times – including multiple statewide bills, as well as bills specific to Prince George’s County and Montgomery County. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency’s end. These efforts demonstrate a sustained desire in Maryland localities for the authority to enact just cause.

At least 5 states, the District of Columbia (since 1985), and 16 localities including Philadelphia (since 2018) have adopted just cause eviction laws. New Jersey’s just cause law (since 1974) demonstrates that the benefit of just cause far outweighs the hypothetical that it hurts development. “Something in the Garden State is clearly working. According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding.”

Additionally, looking at 4 localities in California, a 2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab study finds that "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."

SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to assist renting families with stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring that a landlord state a legitimate reason for an eviction through lease non-renewal eviction boosts the stability of families, neighborhoods, and communities.

According to evictionresearch.net, black households are 3 times more likely to face evictions. (<https://evictionresearch.net/maryland/report/baltimore.html#:~:text=46%25%20more%20female%20headed%20households,1%2C614%20White%20evictions>). They further state “eviction reinforces poverty and limits housing opportunities for the nation’s most economically vulnerable”. The NAACP advocates for the most vulnerable and this is why we believe HB 477 is important to the most vulnerable including communities of color.

For these reasons, we support SB 644 and strongly urge your support to protect tenants and all the citizens of Maryland.

In Service,

NaShona Kess, Esq., MLS
Executive Director
NaShonakess.mdnaacp@gmail.com

SB 644 CP N. Mosby.pdf

Uploaded by: Nick Mosby

Position: FAV



Nick J. Mosby, *President*
Baltimore City Council

100 N. Holliday Street, Room 400 • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
(410) 396-4804 • Fax: (410) 539-0647

February 15, 2024

To: **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee**
Re: **SB 644 Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local
Just Cause Termination Provisions**
Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, I write to express my enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 644 (SB 644) which would allow local jurisdictions like Baltimore City to enact laws that would help reduce evictions in our communities. This bill will give local jurisdictions the ability to enact rules that fit our community standards for maintaining rental housing stability and safety and comfort for our neighbors. The current arrangement does not permit local governments to pass laws that would foster a healthy rental housing market. State law now essentially allows landlords to pursue eviction on any tenant at the end of a lease regardless of that tenant's payment history or any positive effect they may have in their communities. SB 644 would allow local jurisdictions to enact laws that would prevent a landlord from terminating a tenancy where the tenant has paid on time regularly and also been a good neighbor.

In July 2021 the Baltimore City Council took the unprecedented step of enacting a law like this to prevent evictions during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were only able to take that action at that time because of the state of emergency declarations from the federal and state governments in order to prevent the spread of the disease. Landlords at that time were getting around the prohibition on evictions by refusing to renew lease agreements with tenants regardless of payment history or neighborly behavior. As many other corporate entities did at the time, they were aiming to increase rents and profit from a chaotic moment in the housing market. SB 644 would permit us to take permanent action to safeguard against that behavior and encourage stability in our housing market and cohesion among our residential rental communities. Accordingly, I request a favorable report on this bill and look forward to its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nick J. Mosby".

Nick J. Mosby
President, Baltimore City Council

SB0644_RachelKassman_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Kassman

Position: FAV

Date of Hearing: February 16, 2024

Rachel Kassman
Baltimore, MD 21206

TESTIMONY ON SB #0644 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Rachel Kassman

My name is Rachel Kassman. I am a resident of District 45. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0644, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

Following the above introductory paragraph, in this paragraph you should describe who you are, what synagogue or other organizations you belong to, not including JUFJ. It is actually more powerful not to list JUFJ since we will also be submitting separate JUFJ testimony. Share why you care about the bill -- mention your values, Jewish tradition, moral framework, personal experience with the issue, professional expertise, etc. that guide your viewpoint.

Use the body paragraphs to more fully present your personal story, how it relates to the proposed bill, and how passing or rejecting the bill will improve the lives of people in Maryland. What do you think will be fixed/broken by passing this bill? What would have been different, positively or negatively, if this bill had been a law when your personal story occurred? In total, your testimony should be roughly a page, so you don't need to add a ton of detail.

The closing paragraph should reiterate your position on the bill. Explain why you think the bill will be effective/ineffective, outcomes that the bill will achieve, etc. This does not need to be long. End with: **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0644.**

HB477- Just Cause Eviction Enabling.pdf

Uploaded by: Rebecca Shillenn

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am a resident of District 45. **I am testifying in support of HB477/SB644.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

HB477 allows local jurisdictions to require a just basis for landlords to either refuse to renew or to cut off month-to-month/week-to-week leases. This legislation would enable local legislatures to pass their own laws, if they choose, limiting how and when lease non-renewals occur, requiring landlords to have a just cause to non-renew, or requiring landlords to prove a just cause in court.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the rate of non-payment eviction was slowed by court delays and emergency rental assistance, lease-non-renewal evictions roughly doubled. This means that working people and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. They have no choice but to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay in their communities. A 2019 study from Princeton & the Eviction Lab found “just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.”¹ Without this bill, jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City face preemption challenges to trying just cause eviction policies. This bill gives local legislatures the power to decide what’s acceptable and when. It recognizes that local legislatures know how best to help their renters stay stably housed and able to contribute to the workforce and the economy.

This issue goes beyond economics to long-standing racial inequities in housing policy. Our partners at CASA recently reported that on November 22, 2023, seven residents of the Evergreen Terrace Apartments in Hyattsville, MD publicly denounced evictions that they believed were unjust, based on false evidence targeting immigrant and working class families.² In October 2023, the National Equity Atlas reported an estimated 98,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland.³ Of those, 79% of tenants are people of color, including Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans. Crucially, 47% of those households include children, a disproportionate number of whom are Black and Brown, and social scientists have documented declining school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes as negative outcomes among children who experienced eviction.⁴ People of color form less than half of this state’s population, and helping them remain in their homes ensures we stop perpetuating racial inequities, especially lifelong detriments suffered by children.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB477/SB644.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Shillenn

5401 Elsrode Avenue Baltimore MD 21214

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>

² <https://wearecasa.org/tenants-at-evergreen-terrace-apartments-call-out-discriminatory-and-unjust-evict/>

³ <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>

⁴ https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondkimbro.evictions.fallout.sf2015_2.pdf

SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases

Uploaded by: Robin McKinney

Position: FAV



**SB 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause
Termination Provisions
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 16, 2024
SUPPORT**

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 644. This bill authorizes a county (including Baltimore City) to enact local laws or ordinances that prohibit a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease term or seeking to terminate a holdover tenancy without just cause.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

This bill expressly grants 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, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. Without SB 644, local efforts are stymied by legal concerns around preemption. We urge the Committee to move SB 644 favorably so that local government can act with clear authority on this issue.

What is "just cause" policy?

When it comes to lease non-renewals, Maryland is currently a "no cause" state – that is, a landlord can decide to non-renew 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 limit 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 does not impose specific contours for just cause to permit counties to decide. Instead, SB 644 provides a list of options for what "just cause," as adopted by a county, may include, such as substantial lease violations, illegal activities, removal of the property from the market, or personal use of the property by the owner. SB 644's list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted just cause policy. *To be clear, this is a list that localities are free to adopt or change, as localities see fit.*

Where is the interest in "just cause eviction"?

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope



Since 2008, just cause eviction legislation has been introduced 8 times – including multiple statewide bills, as well as bills specific to Prince George’s County and Montgomery County. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency’s end. These efforts demonstrate a sustained desire in Maryland localities for just cause policies.

Washington, D.C. (since 1985) and Philadelphia (since 2018) have adopted just cause eviction policies, and the state of New Jersey, too (since 1974). New Jersey’s policy endeavor over many decades demonstrates that the benefit of just cause far outweighs the hypothetical that it hurts development. [“Something in the Garden State is clearly working. According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding.”](#)

Additionally, looking at 4 localities in California, a [2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab](#) study finds that "just cause eviction ordinances have a significant and noticeable effect on eviction and eviction filing rates. Given the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution."

SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to aid their renters in achieving stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring just cause as a precondition for an eviction can be a tailored policy that boosts the stability of the housing market by stabilizing families, neighborhoods, and communities. SB 644 ensures local legislatures can pass enforceable laws whereby no one is arbitrarily deprived of their housing.

CASH is a member of the Renters United Maryland coalition and asks that the Committee issue a report of FAVORABLE on SB 644.

Demory Support Just Cause SB 644.pdf

Uploaded by: Rodney Demory

Position: FAV

Rodney Demory

SB 644 — Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Position: Support

My name is Rodney Demory. I am 55 years old and have lived in Baltimore city my whole life. I support SB 644 because I have been experiencing ongoing threats of lease non-renewal and retaliation from my landlord for nearly a year.

I have been leasing an apartment in Reservoir Hill since 2020. I love my neighborhood. It's beautiful and my neighbors are great, many of them are friends I've known my whole life.

Early summer of 2023 I found out my landlord wasn't licensed. When I brought this to her attention she was angry and started threatening to take me to rent court for possession of the property. Not too long after that she started increasing my rent randomly every couple of months.

By fall of 2023 she told me and other tenants we had to pay things in the building like fire extinguishers. After simply asking my landlord why we tenants were responsible for paying these safety measures, she proceeded to text and email me nonstop for days threatening to evict me, accusing me of defamation and saying if I kept creating trouble she would increase my rent by \$90. She constantly let me know that she's a lawyer and everyone downtown knows her, reminding me that people would take her word over mine.

Even after I got an attorney through the Public Justice Center, her threats have only escalated. She then sent me a notice to vacate – non-renewing my lease – without stating why. This has taken a great toll on my mental health. I have trouble sleeping and am always anxious and stressed, fearing everyday about my living situation and worrying that one day my landlord will evict me. I cannot enjoy my peaceful neighborhood because my landlord reminds me everyday that she could force me to leave. No one should have to live like this.

It's very important to pass a bill that allows Baltimore City and other counties to pass just cause eviction laws. Without it, tenants like me have no protections against abusive landlords who refuse to renew the lease to retaliate against residents.

For these reasons I urge the committee to vote in support of SB 644.

Rodney Demory

Takoma Park 2024 - SB 644 FAV - Just Cause Enablin

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

**Support Senate Bill 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies -
Local Just Cause Termination Provisions
House Environment & Transportation Committee
February 16, 2024**

The City of Takoma Park supports, and urges favorable consideration of SB 644.

This bill promotes stable housing by expressly granting authority to local legislatures 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, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. Without SB 644, local efforts are stymied by legal concerns around preemption.

The bill articulates many reasonable circumstances that would qualify as reasonable cause. The City agrees with these circumstances. At the same time, it provides protections for renters against potential unfair treatment, discrimination, or surprises that could have far-reaching adverse impacts not only on individuals and families, but entire communities.

Matthew Desmond in his book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* wrote:

“It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart....”

Landlords and property owners are not prohibited from filing “tenant holding over” cases, which is what a local “just cause” law could address. These cases can be brought when a landlord does not want to renew a lease. This can happen when there are legitimate reasons like the causes listed in the proposed legislation such as substantial breach of lease, illegal activity on the part of the tenant, or if the property is being taken out of the rental market.

Under current law, however, a landlord does not need a just cause, or any cause at all. This means that through no fault of their own, families can be evicted when a lease expires. What legal assistance organizations have witnessed in the last year is a growing number of tenant holding over cases and evictions are taking place.

(over)

It is too easy for families to be forced out of their homes with little or no ability to defend themselves. Tenants can be taken to court and displaced with virtually no reason provided. They are often without legal representation and have little chance of success against skilled attorneys.

City staff – and I personally -- have witnessed the devastation of involuntary displacement on our residents. A lifetime of belongings quickly packed up or left on the street ruined by rain and snow. Older residents and young families quickly scrambling to find a place to stay. Children moved from one school to another. All of this negatively impacts not just these individuals and families but our whole community. The City has a number of assistance programs and staff ready to help and work with landlords to help people stay in their homes. But there is still a giant loophole we need to close to prevent involuntary displacement.

We want to be perfectly clear that this bill clearly outlines the process and justifiable reasons for evictions, and still permits landlords to continue to be able to evict a tenant who breaches their lease, engages in criminal activity, endangers other tenants, or does not pay their rent. As public servants, we all want to ensure that if anyone is being removed from their home, it is for good reason. Please don't deny local jurisdictions the authority to make that happen.

For these reasons, Takoma Park urges a favorable report on SB 644 so that local governments can act with clear authority on this issue. We sincerely thank Delegate Wilkins for her leadership on this issue.

LBCMD Priority Support Letter - SB 644.pdf

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarin

Position: FAV



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3185 • 301-858-3185 • 800-492-7122 Ext. 3185 • Fax 410-841-3175 • 301-858-3175 • Black.Caucus@house.state.md.us

February 16, 2024

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Chairman William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for Senate Bill 644 - Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provision, a statewide enabling bill authorizing a county, including Baltimore City, to adopt by local law or ordinance provisions prohibiting a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease period or from terminating a holdover tenancy without just cause. **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

For Black residents in Maryland, this bill will provide much-needed relief. Black renters in Maryland are more likely to be evicted for non-payment of rent compared to their white counterparts. In Baltimore City, specifically, Black renters have the highest eviction count out of all racial and ethnic groups, at a rate of 5.9%, compared to 5.2% for white renters.

The racial disparity in evictions leads to Black Maryland residents experiencing higher rates of student transiency, unemployment, and homelessness, along with other negative impacts. The current rental system in Maryland gives landlords unchecked power to evict tenants from their homes within 60 days for no reason. Eviction for Black residents in Maryland is more worrisome, as racial discrimination in the rental market poses a great barrier to leasing a property in the first place.

Senate Bill 644 will protect Black renters from unjust eviction while allowing localities to enact county legislation under state law. This legislation allows all jurisdictions to determine their own Just Cause stipulations. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports Senate Bill 644 and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

Testimony of Veronica Walker Just Cause SB 644 Sup

Uploaded by: Veronica Walker

Position: FAV

Veronica Walker

SB 644— Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local
Just Cause Termination Provisions

Position: Favorable

My name is Veronica Walker. I live in Baltimore City, and I urge the Committee to give a favorable report on SB 644 that will let the counties and Baltimore pass their own just cause eviction laws.

I began renting my current home in June 2023 because it's right next door to my sister. I have a disability, so it's important to have family nearby.

Right away there were issues. The floors are crooked, water drips out of the ceiling. When the bathroom in the other tenant's unit gets blocked up, it blocks up my bathroom too. I reached out to the landlord about everything that needed to be fixed. Absolutely nothing has been done.

After I notified the landlord of the issues, instead of trying to fix anything, my landlord sent me a notice to non-renew my lease and vacate the unit. I want a better place to live, but it's costly to move, and not easy to find a place just like that.

I haven't done anything wrong, but my landlord is trying to evict me instead of fixing the issues with the property they are supposed to fix. SB 644 would let Baltimore City pass a law that would require my landlord to state a real reason for trying to evict me. I followed all of the rules. The landlord is the one who is trying to avoid spending money to fix the property which is a danger to me and all of my neighbors. Please vote for SB 644 so that Baltimore and other counties can pass laws that bring more fairness and stability for residents like me.

Health Care for the Homeless - 2024 SB 644 FAV - J

Uploaded by: Vicky Stewart

Position: FAV

HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS 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, 2023



Health Care for the Homeless supports SB 644, which would enable local jurisdictions to establish “just cause” or “good cause” limitations on lease non-renewals. This bill expressly grants authority to local legislatures 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, whether by type of building, for certain populations, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. Without SB 644, local efforts are stymied by legal concerns around preemption.

In Maryland, a landlord can decide to non-renew 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.

We know that there is a plethora of health risks associated with the disruptive displacement caused by eviction. Following an eviction, a person’s likelihood of experiencing homelessness significantly increases. Homelessness historically creates new health problems and exacerbates existing ones. Where you or I could easily manage something like diabetes or hypertension in the year 2022, even HIV, the disruptive displacement following an eviction makes caring for these things exponentially harder and sometimes impossible.

We know that mortality among those experiencing homelessness has escalated over the last 5-10 years. Every year, Health Care for the Homeless gathers for our Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day in which we remember the lives of hundreds of people with the experience of homelessness who died that year. There is no amount of health care that can substitute stable housing.

SB 644 recognizes that local legislatures want to aid their renters in achieving stable housing so that they are able contribute long-term to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring just cause as a precondition for an eviction can be a tailored policy that boosts the stability of the housing market by stabilizing families, neighborhoods, and communities. SB 644 ensures local legislatures can pass enforceable laws whereby no one is arbitrarily deprived of their housing.

For the health and safety of the clients we serve and for all Marylanders, Health Care for the Homeless urges a favorable report on SB 644.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland’s leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.

Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.

SB0644 - Maryland Legal Aid - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Zafar Shah

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND
LEGAL AID**

Advancing
**Human Rights and
Justice for All**

SB0644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Feb. 16, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on SB0644 at the request of bill sponsor Senator Anthony Muse.

MLA is a non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to the State's low-income and vulnerable residents. We serve residents in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions and handle a range of civil legal matters, most prominently those arising from housing insecurity. MLA upholds the right to housing, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for which a principal tenet is security of tenure. SB0644 is a vital measure to ensure security for low- and middle-income renting households. MLA urges the Committee's favorable report on SB0644.

When it comes to lease non-renewals, Maryland is currently a "no cause" state – that is, a landlord may non-renew a lease without needing a reason to do so. This means that working people, families, and elders face potential displacement, year to year or even month to month, even when they follow all the rules. These "good tenants" are under constant pressure to accept declining conditions and increasing rents just to stay rooted in their communities.

SB0644 is enabling legislation that would give clear legislating power to Maryland counties and to Baltimore City to establish "just cause" or "good cause" requirements for lease non-renewals. This bill expressly grants authority to localities to decide when it is appropriate for rental agreements to be non-renewed. Under SB0644, local policymakers would determine the scope of "just cause" policy based on local needs, for instance by type of building, for certain populations, for specific lengths of time, or under certain circumstances such as a state of emergency. Without SB0644, local efforts are constrained by state preemption. SB0644 allows localities to act with clear authority on this issue.

SB0644 permits locally tailored just cause protections.

"Just cause" means that a landlord must have a justified reason, determined by statute, for choosing not to renew an expiring lease. Notably, SB0644 does not establish those justified reasons for lease termination. Instead, this bill authorizes local legislatures to define the scope and elements of "just cause" in their own local legislation.

The enumerated list of “just causes” in subsection (a)(3), on page 3 of the bill, is not mandatory. The list offers guidance and reflects the grounds for lease non-renewal that are typically found in other U.S. jurisdictions that have enacted just cause policy. SB0644 authorizes localities to adopt this list, modify it, or invent their own.

It is past time for Maryland to protect all residents from arbitrary non-renewals.

This bill marks the 11th time since 2008 that the General Assembly will have considered just cause eviction legislation, including bills specific to Prince George’s County and Montgomery County. During the COVID-19 state of emergency, Howard County unsuccessfully attempted to prohibit lease non-renewals while Baltimore City passed a short-term provision to require just cause for lease non-renewals until 6 months after the state of emergency’s end. These efforts demonstrate a sustained desire in Maryland localities for just cause protection.

For certain segments of Maryland’s rental market – mobile homes and federally subsidized housing – just cause eviction protection has aided residents for decades. Maryland enacted protections for mobile home park tenants in 1980, including the protection against non-renewals without cause.¹ There are an estimated 7,000 occupied mobile home rentals throughout the state.² Project-based “Section 8” rental assistance requires property owners to have a good cause for non-renewal of a lease. There are nearly 2,000 such properties in Maryland, accounting for over 137,000 rental units.³ The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit program also requires property owners to have a good cause to non-renew a lease. There are more than 830 of these properties throughout the state, accounting for around 78,000 units.

In total, **Maryland’s stock of just-cause-protected properties numbers around 222,000 units**, equivalent to a rental market greater than that of any one of Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George’s County, or Montgomery County.

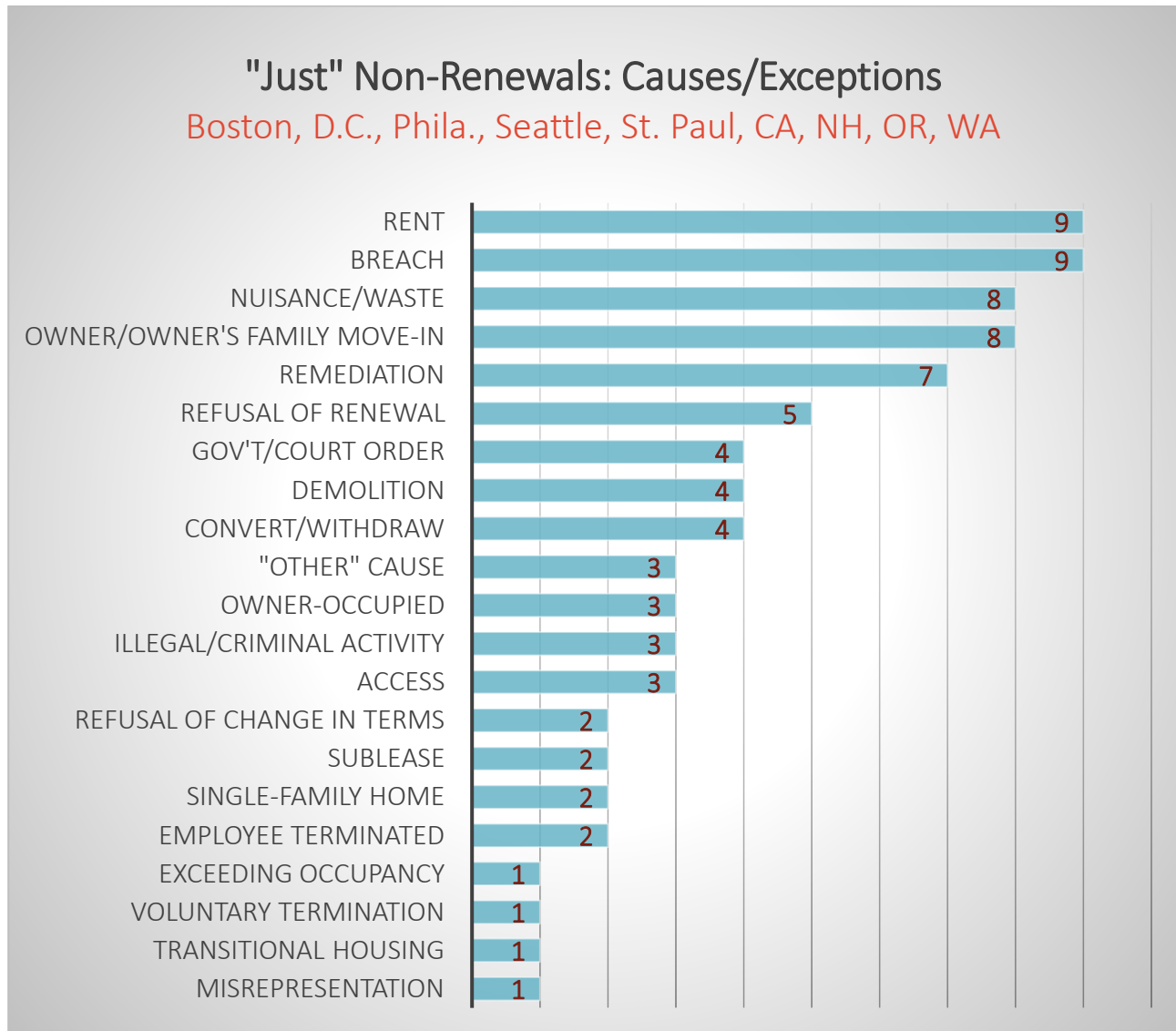
Neighboring cities Washington, D.C. (1985) and Philadelphia (2018) have adopted just cause eviction policies, as have New Hampshire (2015), California (2019), Oregon (2019), and Washington (2021). New Jersey adopted just cause requirements as part of worker protection legislation in 1974. In most

¹ Md. Code Ann., Real Prop. art. § 8A-1101 (Laws of Maryland, Ch. 843 (1980)).

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units S2504 (2022).

³ National Housing Preservation Database, <https://preservationdatabase.org>.

Western European countries, including France and Germany, just cause eviction protection is a standard feature of privately owned rental housing.⁴



⁴ Nathalie Wharton and Lucy Craddock, "A comparison of security of tenure in Queensland and in Western Europe." *Monash University Law Review*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2011) (In Western European countries, "[t]ermination of contract is only possible where the landlord has a 'legitimate' reason for ending the tenancy. Terminating a contract outside of these legitimate circumstances is considered unconscionable. A typical example of prohibited unconscionable conduct can be found in Switzerland's legislation on tenancies. Although Swiss law is one of the least protective of tenants in Western Europe, [it] provides that, regarding cancellation of termination, in general: 1. Notice to leave can be cancelled when it is contrary to good faith principles [and] 2. grounds for the notice to leave must be given if the other party asks for them.").

Just cause protections help – not hurt – community-economic development.

New Jersey’s statewide just cause policy demonstrates, over 50 years, that the benefit of just cause outweighs hypothetical impediments on development. “According to data from the Eviction Lab, New Jersey cities such as Trenton, Paterson, Jersey City, and West New York have among the lowest eviction rates in the country. Meanwhile, construction is absolutely exploding.”⁵ Although industry-backed opponents of just cause protections suggest that the policy hampers development in broad terms, no available, impartial social science research supports their conclusions.

Just cause eviction policies have shown positive impact on the stability of housing and community for low-income renters. Looking at four localities in California, a [2019 Princeton/Eviction Lab](#) study found that “just cause eviction ordinances have a statistically significant negative effect on eviction and eviction filing rates” and concluded that “[g]iven the budget limitations of many states and municipalities to fund other solutions to the eviction crisis, passage of just cause eviction ordinances appears to be a relatively low-cost, effective policy solution.”⁶

Additionally, a recent analysis demonstrates that just cause policies “help the lowest socioeconomic status residents remain in gentrifying neighborhoods, where displacement pressures may be especially strong for vulnerable residents.”⁷ Assessing nine “hot-market areas,” researchers from Berkeley’s Urban Displacement Project, the Changing Cities Research Lab at Stanford University, and the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco concluded that while just cause laws do not encourage new low-income residents to move into a jurisdiction, “[r]enters make fewer downward moves from neighborhoods where more units are covered by just cause protections—suggesting people are able to make planned moves.”⁸

A 2020 study on the effect of just cause protection on entrepreneurial activities found that just cause eviction ordinances in five California cities “increase[d] the number of new, small businesses by

⁵ Henry Grabar, “New York Needs to Learn a Housing Lesson From ... New Jersey?” Slate.com, Feb. 8, 2022, <https://slate.com/business/2022/02/new-york-good-cause-eviction-new-jersey-housing.html>.

⁶ Julietta Cuellar et al., “The Effect of Just Cause Eviction Ordinances on Eviction in Four California Cities,” *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 31 (2020): 99-125, available at <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/effect-just-cause-eviction-ordinances-eviction-four-california-cities>.

⁷ Karen Chapple et al., “Housing Market Interventions and Residential Mobility in the San Francisco Bay Area,” Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, March 15, 2022, https://news.berkeley.edu/story_jump/how-housing-production-policies-impact-displacement.

⁸ *Id.*

6.9%.”⁹ The researchers proposed that just cause policy “significantly enhances renters’ welfare by allowing them to take on risky, but potentially successful, entrepreneurial endeavors. Thus, local renter protection policies have a surprising benefit of promoting job creation and economic growth by encouraging more entrepreneurial activities.”¹⁰ This study showed significant decreased poverty in areas where the ordinances were enacted and found “no significant changes in... local house price growth.”¹¹

Industry-backed opponents of just cause protections often suggest, without evidence, that “no cause” non-renewals and evictions are essential to development. Yet, as one of 6 states that currently preempt just cause ordinances, Maryland lands in the bottom 10 nationally in terms of shortage of affordable and available rental units per 100 extremely low-income renter households.¹² Maryland boasts a shortage of 146,085 units for extremely low-income households, according to a 2023 national survey.¹³ Just cause protections had nothing to do with this failure of development.

Just cause policy balances the court process in eviction cases.

Although Maryland lacks data directly about the incidence of lease non-renewals, judicial data about “Tenant Holding Over” (THO) eviction cases provide some useful insights. There were an estimated 5,360 THO cases filed throughout the state in 2023.¹⁴ In a THO case, the tenant is alleged to have stayed over the expired term of the lease. These court cases do not require the landlord to provide a reason for their decision not to renew the lease. For most tenants who lack just cause protection, there is no defense to THO proceedings absent a procedural defect or a showing of retaliation.

The average total of monthly THO filings since August 2020 (527), when district courts reopened after the initial Covid-19 shutdown, reflects a 113% increase over the monthly average in the 8 months prior

⁹ Steven Xiao and Serena Xiao, “Renter Protection and Entrepreneurship,” SSRN Electronic Journal. 10.2139/ssrn.3574364 (2020) (examining the impact of just cause eviction ordinances in Glendale (2002), Oakland (2002), San Diego (2003), East Palo Alto (2010), and Santa Monica (2010)).

¹⁰ *Id.*

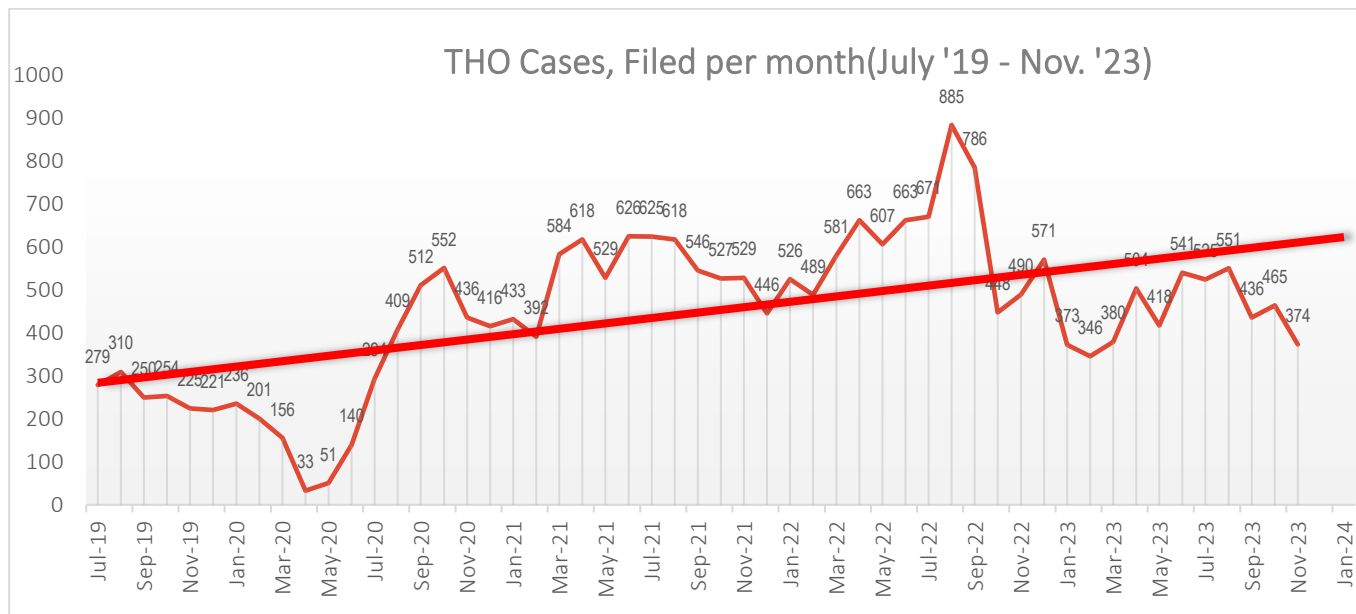
¹¹ *Id.*

¹² National Low Income Housing Coalition, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes* 17, Fig. 10 (March 2023), available at https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/Gap-Report_2023.pdf; see also National Center for Smart Growth and Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., *2020 Maryland Housing Needs Assessment and 10-Year Strategic Plan* 9 (2020), available at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Documents/Other%20Publications/Report.pdf> (citing a shortage of 85,000 rental units for extremely low-income households).

¹³ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *2023 Maryland Housing Profile*, available at https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_MD.pdf.

¹⁴ See District Court of Maryland, *About: Statistics*, <https://mdcourts.gov/district/about#stats>.

to the Covid-19 shutdown (247).¹⁵ In other words, eviction cases based on lease non-renewals spiked during the public health emergency and the post-emergency period of steep rent increases. The numbers have not come back down.



Maryland’s existing protection against retaliatory lease terminations (Real Property § 8-208.1), while helpful, is rarely invoked successfully. The law has numerous gaps that local just cause protections would fill:

- The retaliatory eviction statute applies only to “periodic tenancies,” such as month-to-month or automatically renewing leases. Consequently, tenants in 12-month leases have no protection from retaliatory eviction.
- The retaliatory eviction statute protects a limited list of protected activities, and that protection ends 6 months after the tenant’s protected activity occurred.
- The renter has the burden of proving the landlord’s retaliatory motive – without landlord having to state a reason for the termination and in a court process that does not allow discovery or time to subpoena records or witnesses.

SB0644 allows localities to establish broader protection against retaliation by requiring landlords to state a statutorily permitted reason for non-renewal and to prove that reason in court.

¹⁵ *Id.*

Just cause policy stabilizes our clients.

Mobile park tenant: Ms. J

In August 2022, MLA client “Ms. J” received a 60-day notice to vacate her rental unit. Ms. J had complained repeatedly to the landlord that a neighbor was harassing her. The neighbor had falsely accused Ms. J of selling drugs and gone to other lengths to intimidate her. After several months of Ms. J’s complaints to management, an attorney for the owner issued the non-renewal notice. MLA contacted opposing counsel, who conveyed that the owner had no stated reason for wanting to evict our client.

However, there was one issue that the owner’s attorney had not accounted for: this was a mobile home park, and Maryland law requires a mobile home park owner to satisfy at least one of four enumerated causes for eviction.¹⁶ When the owner realized they lacked a statutory cause to evict Ms. J, the parties negotiated a new lease. Absent the for-cause requirement in the applicable eviction law, Ms. J certainly would have been evicted from the home simply for complaining about harassment.

Subsidized housing tenant: Ms. E

At the end of September 2023, “Ms. E” received a notice that property management would not renew her lease. She had 60 days to remove all personal belongings and turn in the keys. The landlord did not give a reason for this turn of events. It did not seem to Ms. E that the landlord cared how this non-renewal would impact her job or how her son, who has a disability, would handle switching schools mid-year. According to rumors around the building, the property was being sold, and everyone would have to leave. When Ms. E contacted Maryland Legal Aid, we advised her that Maryland law allows no-fault evictions, but also that we suspected this particular property might need to meet additional requirements based on its federal subsidies. Ms. E stayed put while her attorneys were in touch with city officials to track down records that showed the good-cause requirement for lease non-renewal. Just before the 60 days were up, the city held a meeting at the building, announcing that no one should leave.

SB0644 ensures local legislatures can pass enforceable laws whereby no one is arbitrarily deprived of their housing. This enabling legislation recognizes that local legislatures desire to stabilize rental housing so that residents can contribute to the workforce and the local economy. Requiring just cause

¹⁶ Md. Code Ann., Real Prop. art. § 8A-1101.

as a precondition for an eviction can be a tailored policy that boosts the stability of the housing market by stabilizing families, neighborhoods, and communities.

Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 644. If you have any questions, please contact: Zafar S. Shah, Assistant Director of Advocacy – Tenants’ Right to Counsel Project, at zshah@mdlal.org or (410) 951-7672.



SB644 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Zoe Gallagher

Position: FAV



SB644 Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions
Position: Favorable

2/15/2024

The Honorable Senator Smith, Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

CC: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

I am writing today to urge your favorable report on SB644, which would establish just cause laws, requiring landlords to provide a reason for lease non-renewal.

Our tenant advocacy program has a hotline for renters and landlords to call for advice about their rights and responsibilities under the law as well as receive warm referrals to legal services and other assistance. Our staff attorney also provides brief legal advice to tenants. We serve between 900-1200 Maryland residents a year with the majority of tenants living in Central Maryland. Lease non-renewal is a serious concern, especially with private equity firms purchasing properties all around the state.

Because Maryland is a “no cause” state, a landlord does not have to provide any justification for lease non-renewals, putting tenants in a vulnerable position where they have no idea whether or not their lease will be renewed the following year. Housing stability is incredibly important for the wellbeing of children and adults alike. Low-income children who switch schools frequently due to housing instability tend to perform less well in school and are less likely to graduate from high school. Adults facing housing instability have worse mental health outcomes and higher levels of anxiety and depression¹.

Additionally, moving is an incredibly costly process that can put a renter back thousands of dollars. Not only are tenants required to pay first month’s rent and a new security deposit before receiving the one from their last unit back, they must also pay the cost of moving supplies. It can also be incredibly difficult to even find another unit that is affordable based on income, leading many to become further cost burdened by rent.

There have also been instances of landlords retaliating against their low-income tenants for organizing and demanding repairs for safer living conditions by refusing to renew the tenant’s lease. Retaliation from

¹<https://nhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-Impacts-of-Affordable-Housing-on-Health-A-Research-Summary.pdf>



landlords is used as a fear tactic to prevent tenants from asking for repairs and improvements in their rental units, forcing tenants to live in substandard housing or risk losing their homes.

Since renters are more likely to be low-income than homeowners,² these problems become an issue of economic justice, where low-income renters are more likely to be thrown into financial instability because of Maryland's "no cause" policy on lease non-renewals.

Everyone should be provided with a reasonable level of housing security regardless of their income level. For these reasons we urge a favorable report on SB644.

Sincerely,
Zoe Gallagher, Policy Associate

²<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/08/02/as-national-eviction-ban-expires-a-look-at-who-rents-and-who-owns-in-the-u-s/>

MMHA - 2024 - SB 644 - Just cause eviction.pdf

Uploaded by: Aaron Greenfield

Position: UNF



Bill Title: Senate Bill 644, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 16, 2024

Position: Unfavorable

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose membership consists of owners and managers of more than 207,246 rental housing homes in more than 937 apartment communities. Our members house over 667,000 residents of the State of Maryland throughout the entire State of Maryland. MMHA membership also includes more than 216 associate members that supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry. More information is available at <https://www.mmhaonline.org/>

Senate Bill 644 is enabling legislation authorizing a county to enact provisions that prohibit a landlord from failing to renew a lease during the lease period or seeking to terminate a holdover tenancy without just cause. The local ordinance must require a landlord to provide written notice by first-class mail with a certificate of mailing to a tenant stating the just cause for the nonrenewal of a lease or the termination of a holdover tenancy. Just cause for nonrenewal includes seven specific areas, namely, a substantial breach of the lease after receiving notice to cure and the tenant fails to comply and disorderly conduct that the tenant fails to cease.

Senate Bill 644 provides tenants with a life tenancy in the property. The bill fundamentally changes a lease from a two-party contract - between the landlord and tenant - to a unilateral one. For the first time in Maryland history, this bill establishes a property ownership interest of the tenant in the unit. The concept of a tenant holding over becomes a nullity. This bill gives the tenant a stick out of the owner's proverbial "bundles of property rights" that was neither bargained nor paid for. This is unconstitutional under the State Constitution and legislative action that attempts to do so has been previously deemed as such in Muskin v. SDAT, 422 Md. 544,30 A.3d 962 (2011).

Additionally, the passage of this bill eliminates a property owner's obligation to protect its residents right to the quiet enjoyment of their residence since a landlord would be required to serve a nonrenewal notice on a resident at the end of the lease term. It would require an owner to "show cause" and obtain a court order to terminate a lease and remove an offending tenant from the property.

Senate Bill 644 forces housing providers to obtain enhanced documentation and public records in order to meet the just cause standard. Police and fire departments inconsistently respond to Public Information Act (PIA) requests and delays in receiving data can take 60 days.



Reports are heavily redacted, often denied due to ongoing investigation and can cost as much as \$25.00 for an initial report. As a result, public safety agencies will see an increase in costs and workload due to calls placed by property owners to memorialize the disorderly or criminal behavior and respond to greater demand for public records.

This process also pits neighbor against neighbor. Under Senate Bill 644, owners and managers would have to rely on crucial evidence to evict problem residents including resident testimony. Residents are unlikely to testify in opposition to harassing or even dangerous residents as this would place them in harm's way. As a result, these measures foster an adversarial relationship between rental property owners and their residents as they become frustrated with the inability of property owners to act on their complaints and remove problem residents. When issues arise, community residents are subjected to living on the property without relief while the investigative and judicial process to convict an individual of a crime takes time. The outcome is good residents move out.

Furthermore, enabling local jurisdictions to make their own rules regarding what is "just cause" to end tenancies takes away any uniformity of law. Where landlords have multiple rental properties in multiple jurisdictions leasing terms and policy applications will become a patchwork of ordinances making leasing and renting a nightmare for both landlords and tenants. Lastly, the imposition of "just cause" factors will further clog the courts with landlords seeking to repossess their property.

Finally, there is a fundamental unfairness to just cause eviction. Specifically, when a tenant chooses to give notice and vacate a rental property, there is no requirement to give just cause. Why then should a landlord be required to give a just cause? This bill legislates an unconstitutional imbalance in the landlord-tenant relationship.

For the foregoing reasons, MMHA respectfully requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 644.

Aaron J. Greenfield, Director of Government Affairs, 410.446.1992

AOBA SB644 UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Anleu

Position: UNF



Bill No: Senate Bill 644 – Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 16, 2024

Position: Unfavorable

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA) submits this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 644. AOBA represents members that own or manage more than 23 million square feet of commercial office space and 133,000 apartment rental units in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties.

SB 644 allows a county to enact a local law that prohibits a housing provider from deciding not to renew a lease or terminate a holdover tenancy without “just cause.” In practice, just cause laws require housing providers to renew a tenant’s lease in perpetuity unless the provider can prove in court the existence of one of the just causes for non-renewal. While the legislation is presented as a tenant’s rights bill, good residents will suffer if apartment owners cannot let the lease of problem residents’ lapse. AOBA opposes this bill for the following reasons:

- **It will be more difficult to remove nuisance tenants.** This bill requires a housing provider to prove in court one of seven listed just cause reasons for not renewing a lease. Good tenants expect their housing provider to provide them with the quiet enjoyment of their premises, and do not want to be dragged into court to testify against a problematic neighbor. Neighboring tenants will often not testify against the problem tenant for fear of retribution. If the housing provider cannot document and prove the offending behavior, the nuisance tenant will never be removed, and the good tenants will ultimately leave.
- **Non-renewals are infrequent.** Most tenants are good people who abide by the community rules and pay their rent on time. Housing providers have every incentive to keep such tenants in place as long as possible. However, each year about one percent of tenants are the subject of repeated neighbor complaints due to their conduct, threatening behavior, noise, illegal activity, or other lease violations.
- **Litigation costs will increase.** Proving just cause will require considerable documentation and proof that lease violations are occurring. This will compound legal

costs and raise operating expenses for housing providers that are already operating on tight margins.

- **Housing providers have a built-in financial disincentive to pursuing evictions.**

Turning over units and evicting tenants is costly. On average, it can cost 2.5 months of rent or more than \$5,000 to turnover a unit. That does not include income lost from the unit being off the market. If a landlord must evict a tenant, those costs can multiply due to additional rent lost during the legal process. For a detailed explanation of the cost of an eviction please see the attached explainer.

For specific examples of the impact of just cause on multifamily housing providers, please see the attached letter from AOBA member Arianna Royster, President of Borger Residential. Borger operates in Washington, DC, which has just cause.

For the reasons outlined in this testimony and Ms. Royster's letter, AOBA urges an unfavorable report on SB 644. For further information contact Brian Anleu, Vice President of Government Affairs, at banleu@aoba-metro.org

Evictions Are Bad for Business

Evictions are expensive for housing providers to pursue and represent a sunken cost that cannot be recovered. There is no economic incentive for housing providers to file for repossession of an apartment except as a last resort when a lease has been breached, most often for nonpayment of rent, or for jeopardizing the safety or the quality of life of others at the apartment community.

The Built-In Financial Disincentive to Pursuing Eviction

- **Turnover Costs:** *As a general rule of thumb, the cost of turning over a unit is roughly 2-3 month's rent on top of the rent lost during the legal process.* This is attributable to costs for cleaning, repairs, painting, carpet replacement, marketing, new tenant screening and other similar administrative items.
- **Rent Loss During Legal Process:** As of November 2022, the legal process was running approximately 155-222 days in Montgomery County and about 146-190 days in Prince George's County. ***This equates to around 6 months' lost rental income.***
- **Legal Costs:** Legal costs can vary significantly based on the case, but include filing fees, service of warrants and summonses, and attorneys' costs. The low-end average cost of an eviction filing runs around \$500, but can easily run into the thousands of dollars in a contested case.
- **Time off Market:** Notably, the industry standard 2-3 month's rent cost to turnover a unit assumes the immediate turnover of that unit. A housing provider's losses can continue to accrue each month that a unit sits vacant. ***Currently, it is running about 30-60 days to relet a unit once possession has been gained, resulting in an additional 1-2 months' lost rental income.***

Totaled, a single eviction costs the housing provider in excess of \$20,000. Add legal costs into the mix and that means that a housing provider is deprived of approximately 85% of their annual income associated with a particular asset when they are forced to pursue an eviction. (Note: Legal sources cite that *fewer than one in five cases see housing providers collect any portion of the debt owed by the tenant*).

Example

Standard 2-bedroom unit located in Montgomery County leasing at a market average rate of \$2,181 per month.

\$5,453	+	\$13,086	+	\$3,272	=	\$21,811
Turnover costs (Monthly rent X 2.5)		Rent loss during legal process (Monthly rent X 6)		Time off market (Monthly rent X 1.5)		

CONTACT

Brian Anleu | 240.381.0494 | banleu@aoba-metro.org

Ryan Washington | 202.770.7713 | rWASHINGTON@aoba-metro.org



APARTMENT AND OFFICE
BUILDING ASSOCIATION
OF METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON



Just Cause Eviction

Chair Smith,

Please accept this letter in opposition to Senate Bill 644. Borger Residential is a property management company operating in DC, MD and VA for over 75 years. We currently manage 10,000 apartment homes in those jurisdictions. I have been an owner and operator for over 35 years.

Borger Residential opposes the adoption of just cause eviction laws. These policies put good residents at risk by limiting the ability of housing providers to act quickly to remove problem residents.

As a good business practice, apartment community owners and operators want long term residents and strive to avoid evictions where possible. The ability not to renew a lease is necessary to protect residents and staff. Under just cause eviction legislation, housing providers are forced to renew a lease upon the unilateral decision of a resident.

While I could on about the specifics of just cause, I want to provide you with a few examples of the many that I have experienced in Washington, DC. I had a resident who was verbally abusive to her neighbors. She threatened them with harm and even spat on one of them. It was so bad that I had to transfer seven of her surrounding neighbors to other apartments in the building and even have our courtesy patrol stationed on her floor. Ultimately, her violent behavior was taken out on an innocent store clerk who she stabbed. We filed a court case against her, but the legal process took over 18 months.

Another example is a resident who thinks it is amusing to pull the fire alarm at all times of the day and night. We have him on camera doing so. We have not been able to get the police to arrest him. The court process on this resident will take just as long as the first case. Meanwhile, all residents in this 400-unit building must suffer due to the behavior of one resident. What is worse is that if there it is a real fire residents may not take it seriously.

The final example is where a resident and his guest would verbally assault other residents, smoke, drink, scream to be let in the building at all hours of the night and sleep in the hallway outside of the apartment. Once again, I had to transfer the surrounding neighbors to another floor. The legal process took two years. The neighbors were afraid to testify for fear of retaliation.

Executing a just cause eviction to remove problem residents is both time consuming and expensive. Moreover, it enables bad behavior by problem residents that ultimately impacts other members of an apartment community. This often leads to residents moving out of frustration to



avoid enduring bad behavior from others that goes unaddressed. For these reasons, I urge an unfavorable report on SB 644.

Arianna Royster, President
Borger Residential

2 14 24 testimony OPPOSED to SB 644.pdf

Uploaded by: Leonard Foxwell

Position: UNF



TESTIMONY OF LEN N. FOXWELL

Senate Bill 644 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions (OPPOSE)

Presented on behalf of the Southern Management Companies to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 16, 2024

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chairman Waldstreicher and members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Len Foxwell. On behalf of the Southern Management Companies, I respectfully submit this testimony in **opposition to Senate Bill 644**.

Southern is a local and family-owned company that has emerged, over time, as Maryland's leading provider of workforce housing. It has always been Southern's mission to provide our residents with a clean, safe and comfortable place to call home.

Today, it manages more than 25,000 units, serves more than 45,000 residents and provides more than 1,300 good-paying, family-supporting jobs across our state. Southern does so while giving back through countless charitable and civic initiatives.

For example, it has dependably provided its at-risk families with access to food, childcare and preventative health care. It has provided unemployed residents with on-site career fairs, job interview workshops and an innovative employee referral program for career-track positions with Southern. By partnering with both the public and private sectors, Southern has also provided residents with the financial education that is necessary to make wise choices and lead more economically secure lives.

Southern Management has taken these extraordinary steps to retain dependable residents who pay their rent in a timely manner, maintain their homes properly and respect the rights of their neighbors to a positive living experience. This is the right thing to do, and it is also a wise business practice.

It is in that spirit that Southern Management is strongly opposed to Senate Bill 644. While well-intentioned, this legislation contradicts the priorities of this committee and would severely undermine our shared desire to provide families with a safe and comfortable place to call home.

Contrary to what some may believe, owner-operators like Southern have no desire to evict good tenants. Indeed, that is an outcome to be avoided if possible – both because of the costs associated with prepping a vacated unit for re-occupancy, and the natural uncertainty that goes with replacing a reliable and law-abiding tenant.

In 2023, for example, Southern – with more than 25,000 apartment homes in its portfolio, filed fewer than 30 Tenant Holding Over (THO), Breach of Lease (BOL) and Wrongful Detainer actions, collectively, across Maryland. These figures are consistent with Southern’s long-term experiences, and serve as further illustration that evictions are regarded as an avenue of last resort and employed with exceeding rarity.

However, by making it virtually impossible to evict residents who are disruptive, who repeatedly violate the agreed-upon conditions of occupancy, or who poses a legitimate security threat to others within their building, this legislation relieves residents of their most basic obligations of good residency. In so doing, it imposes untenable financial risks upon property managers like Southern and equally untenable security risks upon their fellow residents.

Property managers like Southern simply cannot provide its residents with a safe place to call home without the means to remove violent residents, drug dealers, gang members or even with access to unauthorized weapons. This would be an inevitable consequence of this bill. The provision that demands “proof” of each alleged incident ensures that bad residents will continue to engage in disruptive and unlawful behavior, at the expense of most residents who do the right thing.

For example, it is simply unrealistic to expect residents to take time off their jobs, and risk retaliation and retribution, by testifying against a problematic neighbor. It simply will not happen. The result will be a pervasive loss of safety and security at a time when that is of paramount concern to residents in every part of our state.

Furthermore, by leaving the property manager without the ability to recoup the financial losses imposed by chronically delinquent tenants, this bill would leave them with no choice but to pass those costs onto other residents. This, at a time when too many families in Maryland are struggling to make ends meet and housing affordability is a defining crisis of our time. In jurisdictions that have adopted highly restrictive rent control measures, the property manager will simply have to absorb these losses, which will make it more difficult to reinvest in maintenance and upgrades.

In short, this legislation is a solution to a problem that does not exist. For the reasons stated above, it will inhibit the ability of property managers to keep their residents safe and provide quality housing at an affordable cost. It rewards troublesome residents at the expense of good residents, and in so doing would lead to higher rents and lower standards of living. For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 644, and thank you for your consideration.

sb644.pdf

Uploaded by: Linda Miller

Position: UNF

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne Pelz, Esq.
(410)260-1523
RE: Senate Bill 644
Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies
– Local Just Cause Termination Provisions
DATE: January 31, 2024
(2/16)
POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 644. This bill authorizes a county, including Baltimore City, to adopt by local law or ordinance provisions prohibiting a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease period or from terminating a holdover tenancy without just cause.

The District Court is a statewide court system designed to provide the uniform application of law to all who come before it. This bill could cause the Landlord Tenant law to apply differently in one jurisdiction out of twenty-four resulting in an inequitable application of the law across the State. The Judiciary believes there should be statewide consistency and equity in how landlord/tenant cases are processed across Maryland.

cc. Hon. C. Anthony Muse
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor

MBIA Letter of Oppositon SB644.pdf

Uploaded by: Lori Graf

Position: UNF

February 7, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB644 Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Dear Chair Korman:

The Maryland Building Industry Association, representing 100,000 employees statewide, appreciates the opportunity to participate in the discussion surrounding **SB644 Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions**. MBIA **Opposes** the Act in its current version.

This bill would authorize any county to adopt by local law or ordinance provisions that would prohibit a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease and acknowledges in the text that landlords can have tenants for which a variety of Just Causes can induce a landlord not to renew a lease. This bill would take away a landlord's rights to exercise their rights under a legal contract agreed to by both parties that is designed to protect landlords from tenants that are unfit for the premises.

Furthermore, it places an unfair and potentially expensive burden on landlords and invalidates leases that are legally binding and mutually agreed to. This will lead to increase in rent and a burden to those that the bill is trying to help.

Lastly, due to the housing shortage, this is a time that we should be encouraging investment in Multi Family Construction. When investors look at projects they look the entirety of the project and the risk involved. The risk includes regulations and other things that make being a landlord difficult in the State of Maryland. For these reasons, MBIA respectfully requests the Committee give this measure an unfavorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about this position, please contact Lori Graf at 410-800-7327 or lgraf@marylandbuilders.org.

cc: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 644_realtors_unf.pdf

Uploaded by: William Castelli

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 644 – Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Just Cause Termination Provisions

Position: Unfavorable

Maryland REALTORS® oppose SB 644 which would authorize local government to pass “just cause” eviction laws. “Just cause” eviction laws undermine the fundamental nature of leasehold real estate.

Leasehold or rental real estate is a function of both property and contract law. In a leasehold estate, a tenant is given specific property rights like possession for a certain period of time as determined by the parties in a contract (the lease). The leasehold estate is not meant to be permanent and when the lease term ends a landlord may regain possession.

“Just cause” laws remove the certainty of the end of the lease as agreed to by both parties. Unless a landlord exercises certain “just cause” reasons to end the lease, the landlord must continue to rent to the tenant for as long as the tenant wants to live there. The bill identifies the following “just cause” triggers to end a lease:

- The TENANT commits a “substantial” breach of the lease or causes “substantial” damage to the unit.
- The TENANT refuses to cease disorderly conduct as determined under local laws.
- The TENANT engages in illegal activity on the leased premises.
- The TENANT refuses to give the landlord access to make repairs and improvements.
- The LANDLORD wishes to use the property for family.
- The LANDLORD wants to remove the unit from the rental market.

SB 644 would still permit a tenant to automatically renew a lease in situations where the tenant breaches the lease, but the breach is not substantial. Under the bill, a tenant may engage in repetitive small breaches of the lease like late payments, noise complaints, pest control, etc, with little recourse from the landlord. Some of these breaches are likely to generate complaints from the other tenants or even neighbors.

SB 644 will limit landlords’ property rights in their own property and fundamentally alter a leasehold estate. For these reasons, the REALTORS® recommend an unfavorable report.

For more information contact lisa.may@mdrealtor.org or christa.mcgee@mdrealtor.org