

HB#0709_Richard Kaplowitz_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#0709 -
FAVORABLE

Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0709, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

My Jewish faith declares in our Ancient Jewish texts 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, "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)

There has been significant progress in recent years to pass much needed housing justice legislation, including Access to Counsel and the Tenant Safety Act, Maryland is an extreme outlier with an eviction rate that far exceeds the national average according to recent research. We know that evictions have far reaching and lasting impacts on individuals, families, and communities and most significantly impact low-income Black and brown communities.

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development reports: ¹

In Maryland, racial disparities persist at both the household and neighborhood level. Just as rent burden, eviction, and foreclosure disproportionately impact Maryland households of color, local distress often disproportionately impacts Maryland neighborhoods of color. A focus on Maryland's most populous city, Baltimore, bears this out.

¹ <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Just-Communities/Documents/Baseline-Report.pdf>

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. Oftentimes, this retaliation takes the form of refusing to renew leases. This Good Cause Eviction legislation would protect tenants from this kind of retaliation, and from being evicted for no reason at all. These laws will promote housing stability for tenants, families, and neighborhoods.

This is local enabling legislation, meaning that it would allow local counties to adopt their own good cause laws that meet local needs. With the drastic drop in Federal employment this housing crisis may continue to worsen throughout Maryland requiring this intervention to protect households that are affected by this unemployment crisis.

This bill authorizes a county to adopt, by local law or ordinance, provisions prohibiting certain landlords of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease period or from terminating a holdover tenancy without good cause. This is not a requirement, this bill is a grant of privilege for a county to take this action. It will govern the process by establishing certain requirements and prohibitions for a local law or ordinance adopted in accordance with the Act..

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0709.