

Bill Title: Landlord and Tenant Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies -
Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction) (HB 709, SB651)

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Korman and members of the Environment & Transportation Committee,

My name is Molly Finch with Quaker Voice of Maryland, a faith-based advocacy group which advocates for policies that are just, compassionate, equitable, and respectful of the inherent worth of every person and the Earth upon which we live. Quakers across Maryland told our group that Access to Affordable Housing is an important issue to them. This is why I am submitting this **testimony in support of HB 709 Landlord and Tenant Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)**.

My understanding is that the current law in Maryland allows for residential landlords to remove tenants without needing to provide a reason. I also understand that this stops many renters from holding landlords and property managers accountable for fixing unsafe living conditions, out of fear of retaliation for asking for needed and legally required repairs. Without tenant legal protections, landlords can retaliate against tenants who organize for their rights, demand that repairs be made, or complain about violations of laws about safe housing conditions. Retaliation can take the form of refusing to renew a renter's lease.

The Good Cause Eviction bill would require that landlords who want to cancel a lease must inform tenants of the reason, from a specified list outlined in the bill. Reasons would include not paying rent, engaging in disorderly conduct or breaching the lease agreement, among other issues. It applies to landlords who own six or more residential rentals, so it exempts "mom and pop" landlords. It still allows eviction for tenants damaging property and substantial breach of lease. This bill will help clarify when eviction is warranted, maintain access to safe, healthy housing, and prevent some homelessness.

It is important to note that HB 709 is enabling legislation: it gives local jurisdictions the ability to pass good cause laws which simply require transparency and accountability from large landlords. Right now Maryland explicitly prohibits counties from passing Good Cause Eviction laws. HB 709 would give county residents the ability to pass a good cause bill for their county.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on HB 709.

Sincerely,

Molly Finch

Working Group Member, on behalf of Quaker Voice of Maryland

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