

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. I am a resident of District 40 and live in the Medfield neighborhood of Baltimore. **I am testifying in support of the Tenant Possessions Recovery Act, HB0767.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Eviction is an intensely stressful event in the lives of individuals and families. In addition to whatever troubles underlie the eviction itself and the struggle to find new housing, people being expelled from their homes face the uncertainty of not knowing when the ax will fall and the panic of trying to make sure they hold onto their personal property when the eviction occurs. Currently, Maryland law requires no advance notice of the specific date of an eviction and, unlike in 38 other states, makes no provisions for safeguarding tenant property.

If someone happens to not be home when the sheriff serves the warrant of restitution, the tenants' possessions are put on the street and left subject to theft or damage; the tenant with an impending eviction can only hope they are home at the time, or that they return soon enough to reclaim their property. Everything from necessities like clothes and medication, to family heirlooms and photographs, to important documents like birth certificates and social security cards, can be lost in this way. The impact ranges from mildly inconvenient to catastrophic. For the surrounding neighborhood, too, these piles of belongings strewn across the sidewalks and streets are an embarrassing and unsightly mess, one common enough to own its own category of 311 requests in Baltimore City.

HB0767 would change the law in two important ways: First, **it requires a landlord to give two weeks' notice of the scheduled eviction date**, allowing tenants to appropriately prepare. Second, **it requires a landlord to safeguard the personal possessions left on the property for 10 days**, giving evicted tenants a chance to reclaim them. Neither of these measures stops the landlord from reclaiming their property after a court has issued a lawful warrant of restitution. They simply prevent the eviction process itself from being unnecessarily traumatic and punitive, and bring Maryland into line with the majority of other states.

This issue also goes toward addressing long-standing racial inequities. As of October 2024, the National Equity Atlas estimates that 105,000 households are behind on their rent in Maryland, households that include 129,000 children. Of those, they estimate 89% are people of color. As described evocatively in Matthew Desmond's "Evicted" (2016), eviction has been documented to hit Black women tenants hardest because of intersecting prejudices against women with eviction records and housing discrimination against Black people. This compounds with the \$0.60 to the dollar wage gap for Black women to make each item thrown on the street during eviction even harder to replace, deepening an already critical financial hardship. Marylanders suffering the consequences of historically racist policies ought to be spared further harm.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of the Tenant Possessions Recovery Act, HB0767**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Christina Bell
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore