
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 709
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good
Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 18, 2025

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 709, which would authorize counties to create and enforce rules to stop landlords from failing to renew a lease and/or terminating a holdover tenancy without a valid reason.

Evictions inflict profound harm on families and communities. Marylanders facing evictions are at risk of experiencing homelessness, hospitalization, reduced financial earnings, increased debt, and lifelong barriers to economic security.¹ During the COVID-19 eviction moratorium, there was a significant reduction in rates of homelessness in Maryland, but since then, there has been a 56% increase in the number of evictions in Maryland from 2023 to 2024 and the number of Marylanders experiencing homelessness has correspondingly risen.² HB 709 can reduce the number of eviction proceedings to only those with good cause, sparing many struggling Marylanders from experiencing homelessness and other traumatizing effects.

The current law in Maryland allows landlords to remove tenants from their homes without needing to provide a reason. In FY 2024, Maryland landlords filed over 5,000 “no-cause” evictions.³ Allowing landlords to evict tenants without cause fosters fear of retaliation and disempowers tenants from holding landlords and property managers accountable for fixing deplorable living conditions. Enabling jurisdictions to pass good cause laws would allow renters to exercise their rights and engage with landlords, property managers, and government agencies without fear of retaliation or discrimination.

Research shows that landlords are more likely to seek punitive action against tenants who live in communities of color.⁴ While racially based housing discrimination is already illegal under Maryland law⁵ and federal law⁶, the burden of proof falls on the victim, who would be experiencing eviction. Alternatively, this bill presents a compassionate response that would help to insulate Marylanders from discriminatory

¹ Collinson, Robert, John Eric Humphries, Nicholas Mader, Davin Reed, Daniel Tannenbaum, and Winnie van Dijk. 2024. “Eviction and Poverty in American Cities*.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 139 (1): 57–120. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjad042>.

² “District Court of Maryland Eviction Case Data | Open Data | Opendata.Maryland.Gov.” n.d. Accessed February 9, 2025. https://opendata.maryland.gov/Housing/District-Court-of-Maryland-Eviction-Case-Data/mvqb-b4hf/about_data.

³ “ROOTED IN MARYLAND.” 2025. Renters United Maryland. <https://rentersunitedmaryland.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/RUM-Good-Cause-1-pager-2.7.pdf>.

⁴ Campa, Elijah A. de la, and Vincent J. Reina. 2023. “Landlords’ Rental Businesses before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence from a National Cross-Site Survey.” *Journal of Housing Economics* 59 (March):101904. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhe.2022.101904>.

⁵ Md. Code § 20-101, 20-704, 20-705

⁶ 42 U.S. Code § 3601

effects by requiring the landlords to justify good reason for eviction rather than requiring victims to prove discrimination has occurred when they are already suffering its effects.

As Maryland's budget deficit looms, passing enabling legislation for local Good Cause Eviction laws would save the state money on support programs and provide a no-cost way to prevent homelessness, strengthen our communities, and hold corporate landlords to account. HB 709 takes a decisive step towards protecting tenants from unfair and unjust evictions, which is vitally necessary considering that in FY 24, no-cause eviction filings rose 62% compared to pre-COVID filings.⁷ Eight states – California, Colorado, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Washington – as well as D.C., have passed Good Cause Eviction legislation, as have over 23 localities. Maryland is one of only five states that explicitly prohibits counties from passing Good Cause Eviction laws, leaving Marylanders unnecessarily vulnerable to housing insecurity and homelessness – and the State often in the position of footing the bill for these often preventable social ills.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 709.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

⁷ "ROOTED IN MARYLAND." 2025. Renters United Maryland. <https://rentersunitedmaryland.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/RUM-Good-Cause-1-pager-2.7.pdf>.