



Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of Interfaith Works (IW) for the 2025 legislative session. IW is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides emergency shelter, supportive housing, essential needs and employment programs to over 35,000 residents of Montgomery County, MD, every year.

IW strongly urges the passage of HB709, which is a critical measure to protect Maryland's most vulnerable residents – particularly families, children, and racial and ethnic minority communities. This bill would empower Maryland counties to enact local legislation requiring landlords to renew leases unless there is just cause for eviction. Granting this authority will enhance housing stability, lessen reliance on shelters, and reduce the harmful consequences of forced displacement.

The Benefits of HB709 for Montgomery County:

**Increased Housing Stability:** Long-term tenancy benefits both renters and communities by slowing displacement, maintaining neighborhood stability and reducing material hardship. Montgomery County accounts for 19% (1,144) of the Marylanders experiencing homelessness. During 2023, 34,813 Montgomery County tenants received failure to pay rent notices. So far this year, 32,760 have, indicating that evictions are increasing and will probably eclipse last year's notices. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development has found that forced relocations are disruptive and emotionally damaging, particularly to mothers and children.

**Decreased Reliance on Shelters:** Evictions not only contribute to the homeless total but require many to seek housing in low-barrier shelters. IW manages four shelters in Montgomery County, each of which is filled beyond capacity. It costs \$35,578 per year for every person who endures chronic homelessness. Much of this cost is related to shelter. It is less costly to keep people in their homes than to serve them after they become homeless. Most evicted tenants are forced to compete for the already scarce amount of affordable housing or seek housing in shelters.

HB709 would provide Montgomery County with an essential tool to mitigate the devastating effects of current eviction practices. IW urges a favorable committee report and asks for your full support in passing this bill to protect Maryland's most at-risk populations.

*Debra*

Debra S. Munk  
Chair, Board of Directors

*Courtney*

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