

Date of Hearing: February 18, 2025
Louise Weissman
Greenbelt 20770

TESTIMONY ON HB709
POSITION: FAVORABLE
Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover

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

FROM: Louise Weissman

My name is Louise Weissman. I am a resident of D22. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB709: the Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover bill. I believe the legislation is a critical step toward ensuring that tenants are given adequate notice about their impending eviction, including a reasonable period of time to gather their personal possessions if the eviction were to be executed.

I am a 72 year old retiree, and a tenant in a Greenbelt, MD apartment complex in Prince George's County. I am aware I am in a better position than a good number of tenants who live in my area, especially Black and Brown families. I receive Social Security and a small pension. I also have some retirement savings. Still, my monthly income requires me to have a cosigner for my lease. Maryland's tenant laws aim to support landlords, not tenants. In these times of uncertainty and with the prospects that Social Security and Medicare will be reduced, if not eliminated, I worry.

The Mishnah (written record of Jewish oral law) and the Talmud (commentary about those laws) provide guidance about the relationship between landlords and tenants. Jewish tradition and law teaches that everyone deserves a safe and stable home, regardless of race or income. They emphasize the importance of fairness, safety, and stability for tenants as well as landlords. They teach us that housing is more than a roof over one's head. When an individual or family is denied safe housing, they lose their dignity. Evictions rob families for generations to come.

Landlords in Maryland can evict a tenant for no good reason. Instead of having the opportunity to put down roots in their communities, tenants face housing instability. More than 5,000 evictions are filed each year without providing a reason for the eviction. More than 30,000 Marylanders experience homelessness each year. Curbing the number of evictions needs to be a priority.

Evictions create fear and weaken the ability of tenants to hold landlords and property managers accountable. HB709 would allow renters to exercise their rights and engage with landlords, property managers, and government agencies without fear of retaliation or discrimination. HB709 includes an exemption for small landlords, which keeps the focus on corporate landlord accountability.

HB709 would allow local jurisdictions the ability to pass good cause laws. This law would require accountability from corporate landlords who want to evict a tenant. **Again, this is local enabling legislation – not a state mandate – that gives counties an opportunity to pass good cause within the framework of the county's housing needs and development plans.** Maryland is one of only five states that explicitly prohibits counties from passing Good Cause Eviction laws.

For this reason, I urge a favorable report on HB709.