



Bill Title: House Bill 1257, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Fee Disclosures

Committee: House Environment and Transportation

Date: February 28, 2025

Position: Favorable with Amendments

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members consist of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities. Our members house over 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA also represents over 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

House Bill 1257 requires housing providers to publicly disclose fees associated with residential leases. The bill mandates that advertisements and lease agreements include a detailed list of fees, specifying their amounts and due dates. It prohibits landlords from imposing undisclosed mandatory fees and ensures that tenants receive an itemized breakdown of costs. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will assist tenants in understanding their rights and reporting violations, while also enforcing compliance through administrative penalties, which escalate from warnings to fines of up to \$2,000 for repeat offenses. Additionally, the bill allows local jurisdictions to enact tenant protection laws consistent with or stronger than the bill's provisions

MMHA is not opposed to disclosing fees prior to a prospective resident completing an application. In fact, most housing providers already provide this information to prospective residents as part of the application process.

Amendments:

- Trash as a Utility: Trash collection is an essential public service that, like water, electricity, and sewage, is necessary for maintaining public health, sanitation, and environmental sustainability. On page 2, line 16, MMHA requests that trash collection is added as a utility.
- Controlled by the Housing Provider: Advertisements for rental units on internet listing services may not always originate directly from housing providers. Some websites scrape data from other sources and republish it without the provider's input. In these cases, MMHA members are concerned that they could be held accountable for inaccurate or outdated information despite having no control over its publication, potentially facing stiff penalties. To address this issue, MMHA requests an amendment clarifying that housing providers should only be held responsible for content on websites they control or operate. As such, on page 2, line 28 after "PROPERTIES" insert "OWNED OR CONTROLLED BY THE LANDLORD".



- Inconsistent Patchwork: MMHA has concerns about an inconsistent patchwork of laws throughout the State, related to marketing and advertising rental units. For housing providers who operate in several jurisdictions, this could become unruly. The State should set one policy without local jurisdictions enacting their own set of laws. MMHA requests that page 4, lines 6 through 12 are stricken.
- Penalties: House Bill 1257 establishes significant penalties for violations. We would urge that these fines are reduced. On page 3, line 24, strike “\$500” and insert “\$250”; on page 3, line 25, strike “\$1000” and insert “\$500”; on page 4, line 1, strike “\$1000” and insert “\$750”; on page 4, line 2, strike “\$2000” and insert “\$1000”.

For these reasons, the Maryland Multi-Housing Association respectfully request a favorable report with amendments on House Bill 1257.

Please contact Aaron J. Greenfield at 410.446.1992 if you have any questions.