



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SUPPORT - HB1177**

**Landlord and Tenant-Tenant Repair and Maintenance Complaint Hotline-Establishment**

February 19, 2025

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

**HB1177**, with the sponsor amendments, would direct the Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs within the Department of Housing and Community Development, rather than the Office of the Attorney General, to establish a toll-free hotline for tenant reporting of housing repairs and maintenance complaints as an alternative to reporting directly to the housing management agency, landlord, or local code enforcement. This would create a reporting mechanism through which tenants 1) with general and common area complaints, 2) repeat complaints to which the landlord or its agent have been inadequately responsive, or 3) concerned about being seen as problem tenants and possibly being retaliated upon. Additionally, as a centralized complaint repository, the OTLA will be able to aggregate the data necessary for housing and code enforcement agencies at local and state levels to recognize patterns and identify bad actors for investigation and other actions. This bill will help ensure Maryland residential rental units remain secure, safe, and habitable.

Under discussion are additional amendments to remove the toll-free requirement and using limiting complaints to those which have been previously reported to the housing management agency or landlord and inadequately addressed.

Under the 2024 statute enacted, the OTLA is tasked with<sup>1</sup>:

- Developing resources to aid residential tenants in understanding and exercising their legal rights, including publishing the Maryland Tenants' Bill of Rights: a summary of existing laws and protections covering Maryland renters
- Serving as a point of contact for tenants to report violations by landlords or property managers and, when appropriate, making referrals to enforcement agencies Providing resources for tenants to access credit counseling services
- Referring eligible tenants to the [Access to Counsel in Evictions program](#) administered by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation
- Collaborating with county and local governments that provide tenant advocacy and assistance.
- Adopting regulations and receiving notices and other documents related to a tenant's exclusive negotiation period and right of first refusal established under the Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act.

<sup>1</sup> <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Tenant-Landlord-Affairs/Pages/default.aspx>

For most Maryland tenants and landlords, reporting and responding to repair and maintenance issues is managed routinely and in an uncomplicated manner, resulting in appropriate determination of responsibility and timely resolution. For many tenants, however, complaints are ignored, repairs delayed, or tenants who continue to complain run the risk of lease non-renewal or other retaliatory threats or actions.

Substandard housing conditions (i.e., mold infestations, poor ventilation, structural hazards) have serious public health implications, particularly for children, older adults, and individuals with chronic illnesses and are all too common. Neighborhoods throughout the state are impacted by absentee and inattentive landlords. Local code

enforcement in most locals lack the resources for routine periodic inspections and, instead, function under complaint driven investigations and enforcement.

Under current statute and the amended **HB1177** OTLA, the office may:

- Refer tenants to legal assistance through organizations such as the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.
- Refer serial or serious violations to local code enforcement, the OAG office of Consumer Affairs, or appropriate housing and consumer protection advocacy agencies for possible pursuit of legal remedies,
- Facilitate sharing of housing violations information between the state's public housing agencies that administer the federal HUD programs and local code enforcement agencies that enforce local housing codes.

**HB1177** is a tool for empowering tenants – especially those in underserved communities who may lack resources to advocate for their rights, better ensuring upkeep of rental housing stock housing, facilitating data-driven policy to strengthen tenant protections, lowering public health costs, and enhancing housing justice across the state. I urge a favorable report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "B. J. Allen", written in a cursive style.