

February 7, 2025

CFA's Strong Support Of SB0609/HB0817

The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) is an association of non-profit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education.

CFA urges speedy passage of HB0817, which would prohibit landlords from using an algorithm fueled by non-public rental data to keep rental prices and terms artificially unfair.

Algorithms increasingly mediate critical determinations for Marylanders – housing eligibility, hiring decisions, credit rate determinations, what content they're shown, and more. This is often done with no transparency or choice for consumers, and to the detriment of their bank accounts.

In the past several years, as reporting and lawsuits by the Department of Justice and [Attorney General Brown](#) illustrate, major property management companies and landlords conspired to keep rent prices and terms artificially high by sharing non-public data with the same third party companies – leading to unfair terms for over 100,000 Marylanders.

Despite using an algorithm, it's simple – management companies sign up with the same third party that aggregates non-public data about their occupants, then get fed recommended rates above the market.

[Jurisdictions have already mobilized to prohibit these actions](#) – similar measures were passed in Philadelphia and San Francisco last fall, and have been introduced in California, Colorado, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia this term.

This bill is simple, well-tailored, and will address this illegal and immoral behavior while allowing for rental prices to reflect a competitive market. Maryland has the chance to be a leader in helping cut costs, fight for consumers, and simply prohibit clearly anticompetitive behavior regardless of what technology is used to do it. By passing SB0609, you can do exactly that.

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