

Robin Truiett-Theodorson
Chairperson | Board of Commissioners


Janet Abrahams
President | Chief Executive Officer



HB 1177

February 28, 2025

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Janet Abrahams, Chief Executive Officer 

RE: House Bill 1177 – Landlord and Tenant - Tenant Repair and Maintenance Complaint Hotline - Establishment

POSITION: Letter of Information

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) wishes to provide a letter of information on House Bill 1177.

HABC serves over 20,000 low-income households through our Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. Our current public housing inventory consists of approximately 6,000 units in conventional public housing developments and various scattered site properties throughout Baltimore City.

HB 1177 Landlord and Tenant - Tenant Repair and Maintenance Complaint Hotline – Establishment requires the Attorney General to establish a toll-free hotline for tenant complaints concerning repair and maintenance of residential property. Once a complaint is reported, the office of the attorney general may:

- (1) refer a tenant to the Maryland legal services corporation or other legal services entity;
- (2) report violations for local code enforcement; or
- (3) bring an action in an appropriate court to: (i) recover for injury or loss sustained as a result of a violation of this title; and (ii) seek equitable relief for the tenant.

HABC is concerned about the proposed legislation as it is currently written. The law does not require tenants to provide notice before contacting the hotline. Additionally, without a provision that mandates tenants to provide evidence of notice and an opportunity to resolve issues, this legislation could lead to numerous damage claims against HABC, which would have a significant financial impact on the agency.

Furthermore, landlords should be notified of tenant complaints and given a reasonable amount of time to address the reported defects or maintenance issues. If the repairs are not completed within this timeframe, only then should an action be taken to determine whether the landlord failed to address any issues after being given notice and an opportunity to resolve them.

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Tenants residing in our public housing units are required to inform HABC about necessary repairs and maintenance issues. However, these issues are sometimes not reported or are reported only after they have persisted for a considerable length of time. Therefore, we request the addition of the bolded language below:

8-504. 16

(A) THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SHALL ESTABLISH A TOLL-FREE HOTLINE TO:

(1) ALLOW A TENANT TO REPORT A COMPLAINT RELATED TO REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE OF RESIDENTIAL REAL PROPERTY, INCLUDING RESIDENTIAL REAL PROPERTY OWNED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THE STATE, OR A LOCAL GOVERNMENT; AND

(2) ALLOW A TENANT TO REPORT A COMPLAINT ANONYMOUSLY **WITH SUFFICIENT INFORMATION TO GIVE NOTICE TO THE LANDLORD OF THE PROPERTY FOR THE OWNER TO INVESTIGATE THE COMPLAINT.**

(B) AFTER REVIEW OF A COMPLAINT REPORTED UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL MAY:

(1) NOTIFY THE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY OF THE COMPLAINT AND GIVE THE OWNER A REASONABLE OPPORTUNITY TO INVESTIGATE AND CURE ANY DEFECTS,

~~(1)~~(2) REFER A TENANT TO THE MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION OR OTHER LEGAL SERVICES ENTITY;

~~(2)~~(3) REPORT VIOLATIONS FOR LOCAL CODE ENFORCEMENT; OR

~~(3)~~(4) **UPON A DETERMINATION THAT A LANDLORD FAILED TO CURE ANY DEFECTS AFTER NOTICE AND OPPORTUNITY,** BRING AN ACTION IN AN APPROPRIATE COURT TO:

(I) RECOVER FOR INJURY OR LOSS SUSTAINED AS A RESULT OF A VIOLATION OF THIS TITLE; AND

(II) SEEK EQUITABLE RELIEF FOR THE TENANT.







Without the inclusion of clear language to define specific provisions, such as notice requirements, standing to file an action, and the types of damages that can be reasonably claimed along with their potential amounts, there is a risk of lawsuits being based on unfounded grounds and without proper notice, leading to financial burdens on HABC in defending such suits.

HABC respectfully requests amendments to House Bill 1177 to address these concerns.

Respectfully submitted:

Janet Abrahams, HABC President & CEO

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