



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0709
Landlord and Tenant Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local
Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

Hearing before the House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 18th, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kristen Bonner (KB), and I am employed as a Staff Attorney with CASA, Inc., which is a part of Renters United Maryland. On behalf of CASA, Inc., **I am writing to express our strong support for HB709**. CASA is the largest membership-based immigrant rights organization in the mid-Atlantic region, with more than 60,000 members in Maryland. Our mission is to create a more just society by building power and improving the quality of life in working class and immigrant communities. We envision a future where our members stand in their own power, our families live free from discrimination and fear, and our diverse communities thrive as we work with our partners to achieve full human rights for all.

For nearly forty years, CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing much needed services to these communities, helping to ensure that low-income immigrants are able to live rich and full lives.

Currently in Maryland, corporate landlords can evict a tenant for no good reason and as a result many Marylanders are facing severe housing instability. In our state, landlords make 5,000+ families homeless each year because of an eviction and more than 30,000 Marylanders experience homelessness each year. There is a dire need to curb evictions and keep Marylanders rooted in our communities.

HB 709 would allow local jurisdictions the ability to pass good cause laws, which simply require transparency and accountability from corporate landlords for why they are choosing to evict a tenant. Again, this is local enabling legislation – not a state mandate – so that counties may pass good cause within the framework of their housing needs and master plan. Maryland is one of only five states that explicitly prohibits counties from passing Good Cause Eviction laws.

Good Cause Eviction is critical for CASA members and communities to stay in their

homes. We have seen, time and time again, when tenants organize, when they complain about conditions, and enforce their rights, landlords and property managers respond with Tenant Holding Over (THO) eviction suits. Tenants who are hardworking, who pay their rent on time and cause no trouble for their neighbors, are retaliated against when they assert their rights. Good cause would protect our member and communities, many of whom face cultural, educational, and linguistic barriers against blatant retaliatory. This is necessary to reduce the generational poverty and displacement that eviction causes.

The current law in Maryland allows for landlords to remove tenants from their homes without needing to provide a reason. This creates fear and disempowers tenants from holding landlords and property managers accountable for fixing deplorable living conditions. HB 709 would allow renters to exercise their rights and engage with landlords, property managers, and government agencies without fear of retaliation or discrimination, i.e., to have some security in their homes, school system, and support network. HB 709 also has an exemption for small landlords, which keeps the focus on corporate landlord accountability.

Research shows that good cause eviction laws greatly decrease eviction filings meaning that fewer Marylanders would be at risk of being put out of their homes. This would mean fewer evictions for Black Maryland residents who – because of centuries of government-sponsored housing discrimination – are disproportionately impacted by evictions. One in four Black children in renting households face the threat of eviction each year due to structural and systemic racism. The research is also clear that Good Cause Eviction has no impact on new housing development.

As Maryland's budget deficit looms, passing enabling legislation for local Good Cause Eviction laws would save the state money on support programs and provide a no-cost way to prevent homelessness, strengthen our communities, and hold corporate landlords to account.

Eight states – California, Colorado, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Washington – as well as D.C., have passed Good Cause Eviction legislation, as have over 23 localities.

For this reason, I urge a favorable report on HB 709.

Kristen Bonner (KB), Esq.
Staff Attorney, kbonner@wearecasa.org