

Friday, February 14, 2025



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland. I am a resident of Baltimore. I am testifying in **support** of the **Tenant Possessions Recovery Act, HB0767**.

Currently, Maryland law requires *no advance notice* of the specific date of an eviction and, unlike in 38 other states, makes no provisions for safeguarding tenant property. Eviction is already an intensely stressful event in the lives of individuals and families impacted by housing instability, but in addition to whatever difficulties might contribute to the eviction itself and the struggle to find immediately-available new housing, Marylanders facing possible eviction from their homes face the uncertainty of not knowing when exactly they will be expelled from their homes and the panic of trying to hold onto their personal property when the eviction actually occurs.

In Maryland, if someone happens to not be home when the sheriff serves a warrant of restitution, the tenants' possessions, including their pets, are put on the street and left subject to theft or damage. When facing possible eviction, a tenant can only hope they are home at the time, or that they return soon enough to reclaim their property. Everything from necessities like clothes and medication, to family pets, to family heirlooms and photographs, to important documents like birth certificates and social security cards, can be lost in this way. The impact of this merciless and humiliating disruption ranges from extremely inconvenient and stressful to financially ruinous and catastrophic.

For the surrounding neighborhood, too, these piles of belongings strewn across the sidewalks and streets are a demoralizing and unsightly mess. This sight is common enough to own its own category of 311 requests in Baltimore City.

HB0767 would change the law in two important ways: First, **it requires a landlord to give two weeks' notice of the scheduled eviction date**, allowing tenants to appropriately prepare by finding replacement housing and packing and moving their belongings. Second, **it requires a landlord to safeguard the personal possessions left on the property for 10 days**, giving evicted tenants a chance to reclaim them without fear of theft, loss, or damage.

Neither of these measures stops the landlord from reclaiming their property after a court has issued a lawful warrant of restitution. They simply prevent the eviction process itself from being unnecessarily traumatic, dehumanizing, shaming, and punitive, by bringing Maryland into line with the majority of other states.

This bill also moves Maryland toward addressing long-standing racial inequities. As of October 2024, the National Equity Atlas estimates that 105,000 households are behind on their rent in Maryland. These households include 129,000 children. Estimates indicate that the people in those households are 89% people of color. As described in Matthew Desmond's "Evicted" (2016), eviction has been documented to hit Black women tenants hardest because of intersecting prejudices against women with eviction records and housing discrimination against Black people. This compounds with the \$0.60 to the dollar wage gap for Black women to make each item thrown on the street during eviction even harder to replace, deepening an already devastating financial hardship. Marylanders suffering the consequences of historically racist policies ought to be spared further harm.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of the Tenant Possessions Recovery Act, HB0767**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
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