



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 28, 2025

**HB1257**

**Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Fee Disclosures  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1257**. Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

The Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases - Fee Disclosures Act seeks to enhance transparency and fairness in the rental housing market by ensuring that landlords disclose all mandatory fees associated with a lease agreement. Under this bill, landlords would be prohibited from advertising misleading rental rates and required to provide full disclosure of fees to prospective tenants. Additionally, landlords would be prevented from imposing undisclosed mandatory fees, and the Department of Housing and Community Development would be empowered to assist tenants and impose penalties for violations of these regulations.

**House Bill 1257** is essential for protecting individuals and families from financial exploitation, particularly those already burdened by economic hardship. The Catholic social teaching principle of solidarity calls on society to prioritize the needs of the vulnerable, ensuring that people are not taken advantage of by unjust housing practices. Hidden fees create unnecessary financial strain, making it more difficult for individuals and families, especially those with low and fixed incomes—to secure stable housing and meet their basic needs. By requiring landlords to be transparent about fees, this bill fosters fairness and ensures tenants can make informed decisions about their housing options.

Additionally, it promotes trust and accountability in the rental market, preventing deceptive practices that can lead to housing instability, evictions, and financial distress. When individuals and families face unexpected financial burdens due to undisclosed fees, they are at greater risk of housing insecurity and homelessness, which negatively affects community well-being, social services, and economic stability. Ensuring clear and fair rental agreements strengthens communities by allowing residents to establish roots, contribute to the local economy, and build stronger relationships within their neighborhoods.

This bill aligns with the preferential option for the poor, the moral imperative to protect and uplift those who are most vulnerable. Housing is not just a commodity, but a basic human need that allows individuals to live with dignity and security. By holding landlords accountable

and ensuring transparency in rental agreements, Maryland can create a more just, stable, and compassionate housing system that upholds the rights and well-being of all tenants, particularly those who are most at risk of exploitation and displacement.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 1257**.