

***Testimony to Support HB767
Tenant Possessions Recovery Act***

***Environment and Transportation Committee
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As a Commissioner of the Montgomery County Interagency Commission on Homelessness, and Chair of the Commission's People's Committee, I have encountered many individuals with egregious stories of their eviction encounter –experiences which leave a lasting memory of trauma and stress. I am here to ask the members of this committee for a favorable response to HB767.

Imagine returning home from a trip to the library or the grocery store one day to find all of your belongings piled outside on the lawn without warning –cherished and once valuable items broken when they were tossed carelessly by the sheriffs' movers –all of your worldly possessions quickly diminishing as your neighbors pick out items and carry them off. If you have minor children old enough to have been home when the eviction squad came, they are sitting glumly atop the pile of furniture keeping the greedy-eyed neighbors at bay, and pretending that this is not the most embarrassing day of their entire existence to date.

To make matters worse, if you exhibit any emotion that can be construed as “mentally imbalanced” by the sheriff's thugs –i.e. angry words, cursing, sobbing, falling apart, you could easily find yourself at the nearest hospital for a week or so, until you “calm down”. Out of a dozen patients at a mental health wing of one hospital, three of the patients (all of whom were elderly), were admitted on the day of their eviction –and all three claimed that they did not pose a danger to self or others at any time during their eviction proceeding –regardless, each was held against her will (for observation) for at least a week. When this happens –you may as well consider all of your belongings irretrievable. If your children are teenagers, without knowledge of where or how to seek assistance, and avoiding placement in foster care while you are locked in the hospital ward –they may be forced to sleep outside until you are released.

This bill prevents this cruel and unnecessary scenario by informing a tenant of their eviction date, and allowing them time to remove their belongings. If landlords are reluctant to wait the 10 days, because they truly believe that the tenant intends to leave their belongings behind, they can ask the tenant to sign a statement that they do not plan to return to move belongings within the 10-day window.