



FAVORABLE

SB651 – Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC) is a Maryland-based, trans-led group working to ensure that all transgender and gender-expansive Marylanders are empowered to live safe and affirming lives. TRAC has a broad membership, including community members with lived experience, organizers, medical professionals, lawyers, researchers, religious leaders, allies, and more.

TRAC supports SB651, Good Cause Eviction. Transgender and nonbinary individuals face discrimination in many walks of life, and housing is no exception. Despite anti-retaliation laws, it is nearly impossible to hold landlords accountable for discriminating when, under current law, landlords don't need to give any reason at all to no longer offer an existing resident a lease.

The 2022 U.S. Trans Survey found that nearly one-third of transgender individuals have experienced homelessness.¹ We expect to see this number rise. This is an especially destabilizing time for trans people, and the political climate continues to fuel transphobia. Not having a good cause eviction standard in place creates legal pathways for landlords to discriminate against trans people and other vulnerable groups despite Maryland's strong anti-discrimination laws, creating even more instability. By allowing counties to create their own good cause laws, this enabling legislation would help prevent this additional assault on trans peoples' lives

The state of Maryland has been admirable in its defense of its trans residents, both by passing recent protections and standing up to the unprecedented abuses of the current presidential administration, but if trans people cannot stay stably housed in Maryland, they cannot count on these protections either.

If a landlord continues renting a home out, then the person currently renting it should get the first chance to rent it, unless the landlord has a compelling reason not to offer it to them. All people, cisgender and trans, deserve that common sense protection.

We urge a favorable report on SB651.

¹ Sandy E. James, *et. al*, 2022 U.S. Trans Survey: Early Insights, Report (2024) p.21, https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/2022%20USTS%20Early%20Insights%20Report_FINAL.pdf.