

Bill Title: SB 651 Landlord and Tenant Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Allison Evans, Bowie, MD Resident

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Allison Evans. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 651 Landlord and Tenant Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction).

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, 5,000+ families are made 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.

SB651 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.

This bill is important to me because I recently helped move a friend who was evicted from a property where she had dutifully paid rent on time every time for almost a year. The landlords had slowly made her existence there a living hell, but she had nowhere else to go so she stayed. She feared that if she gave any pushback against the slowly devolving conditions and ever increasing list of rules that they would find cause to evict her. Their final act was to tell her to get out, with no just cause and no warning. Her compliance to their torment had meant nothing after all, and worse, they were allowed to evict her in this manner under current law. I want to reiterate that she had never missed a rent payment, and had followed every one of their rules to the letter.

Rented properties are someone's home. It is not an Air B&B where someone is staying for fun. A person's entire life stems from their home. It's where they should feel safe enough to sleep and have their meals. It's where they raise children and gather with family for the holidays. To take away someone's home for no justifiable reason is an act of violence. It tears apart that person's life.

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. SB 651 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. SB 651 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. 1 in 4 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 SB 651.