

**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:** Tonya Spriggs

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Tonya Spriggs and I am a Marylander. 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 am currently going through a similar situation - I have been dealing with an ongoing pest infestation in my apartment building which has meant I had to pull all items out of closets and cupboards to place in areas where pests could not as easily get to. All of my items are at risk of being destroyed and I don't want to speak up too much as I can tell that it is impacting the way my landlord interacts with me.

I know there are things I can improve as a tenant and I am working on that, but I am now scared that I could lose my housing simply because the relationship is souring. We need a fair process like this where landlords and tenants have a clear process they must follow. This has been going on for years, I also grew up in an apartment where there was a gaping hole in the ceiling that the landlords would not fix and we had to deal with mice and water that would fall down into our home.

From past and present experience, I am totally against people being evicted without good cause and I want to ensure they have protections to speak up.

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.