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February 18, 2025

COMMITTEE: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

BILL: SB 651 – Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation is pleased to support SB 651 – Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies – Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction). This bill would authorize Maryland counties to adopt “good cause” measures that would limit landlords’ ability to evict a tenant or not renew their lease without stating a good or just reason for doing so.

Currently, Maryland is a “no cause” state, meaning that a landlord does not have to provide any justification for lease non-renewals. This leaves renters in a vulnerable position and under a constant threat of displacement. Not only does this contribute to housing insecurity in our communities, but it also pressures renters to stay quiet and accept poor living conditions, increasing rents and other arbitrary policies out of fear of retaliation from their landlord and no longer having a place to live.

Good housing and good health are inextricably linked. During the Horizon Foundation’s most recent strategic planning process that involved extensive community engagement, residents cited obtaining safe, affordable and high-quality housing as one of the biggest barriers to their ability to live a healthy and abundant life. This is backed up by an abundance of research: studies show that people who face housing instability are more likely to experience poor mental and physical health outcomes.¹

No-cause evictions, known as “Tenant Holding Over” evictions, have spiked in Maryland since 2020. SB 651 would allow counties to determine their own “good cause” stipulations that make sense for their communities and can meet local housing needs, while also exempting small “mom and pop” landlords from the bill’s requirements. At the same time, Maryland families would be legally protected from the unchecked power of larger, corporate landlords to evict them from their homes without good cause in an effort to raise rents, avoid upgrading living conditions, discriminate against certain renters and more. In addition, research shows that

enacting good cause eviction provisions does not negatively impact new housing development.

Laws and practices remain in place that hold many of our friends and neighbors back and lead to poorer health outcomes and fewer opportunities for housing stability and overall social mobility. But we believe health is a fundamental right and that everyone deserves a fair opportunity to attain it at the highest level. Housing security is key to achieving this goal. For this reason, the Foundation **SUPPORTS SB 651** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/briefs/housing-and-health-overview-literature>