

SB 651 –Landlord and Tenant Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)
Hearing before the Judicial Proceedings Committee, February 18, 2025
Position: FAVORABLE

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the federally designated Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. One of DRM's goals is to end the unnecessary segregation and institutionalization of Marylanders with disabilities. To achieve this goal, DRM's Housing Team works to expand opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities and to live in affordable and accessible housing. This includes representing persons with disabilities in eviction proceedings to prevent unnecessary homelessness and institutionalization.

DRM is a member of Renters United Maryland which urges you to support 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.

SB 651 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 not to renew a lease and evicting a tenant. Again, this is local enabling legislation – not a state mandate – so that local jurisdictions 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.

Many of DRM's clients experience lease non-renewals and tenant holding over cases. Some of these individuals live in declining conditions and if they speak out about these conditions, they are at risk of receiving a non-renewal of their lease and displacement. It is both expensive and exceptionally difficult for people with disabilities to move due to their disabilities and related health conditions. This bill would authorize jurisdictions to enact good cause legislation requiring landlords to renew a tenant's lease unless they have *good cause* reason not to renew. It would allow tenants to stay in their units without unnecessary interruption and upheaval due to a

non-renewal of the lease.

Under current law, landlords can remove tenants from their homes at the end of the lease term without cause and without providing a reason. This creates fear and disempowers tenants from holding landlords and property managers accountable for fixing deplorable living conditions. SB 651 would empower 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 risk being put out of their homes. This means fewer evictions Marylanders with disabilities as well as Black Maryland residents who are disproportionately impacted by evictions. One in four Black children in a renting household faces 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. In addition, fewer eviction filings would reduce caseloads for district court judges thereby decreasing expenses for the Maryland judiciary.

Moreover, 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 these reasons, DRM urges a favorable report on SB 651.

Sincerely,

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