

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: JoAnne Lyons Wooten on behalf of Maryland Poor People's Campaign

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is JoAnne Lyons Wooten with Maryland Poor People's Campaign. 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).**

Maryland Poor People's Campaign (MD PPC) demands legislation that protects the most vulnerable Marylanders, including poor and low-wealth individuals. Many of these vulnerable renters are families with children.

This Bill is important to Maryland Poor People's Campaign because safe and secure housing for all is a fundamental moral right for all Marylanders; Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., —the founder of our movement—was a persistent Housing Rights champion who played a crucial role in passing the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

57 years after the Fair Housing Act, Maryland still fails to protect the rights of poor and low-wealth tenants by allowing landlords to evict them WITHOUT GOOD (or ANY) CAUSE.

For several years, the Policy Work Group of MD Poor People's Campaign has visited many of your offices to support Good Cause Eviction Legislation. We are dismayed that this Senate committee in 2024 did not vote to bring Local Good Cause to a floor vote.

A week ago, we joined 128 faith leaders from MD Just Power to visit legislative offices in support of SB651/HB709 Good Cause Eviction. Our team was surprised that some legislators did not know Local Good Cause Eviction is an **enabling** bill.

The following overview of SB651 documents the failures of our state to protect renters faced with 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 **enable** 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.

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. 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. 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.**