



Testimony on behalf of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce

In Opposition to

*Senate Bill 651—Landlord and Tenant—Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies—Local
Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)*

February 18, 2025

House Environment and Transportation Committee

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (GBCC) was founded in 1926. Since then, the organization has grown to more than 600 businesses located throughout the Greater Bethesda area and beyond. On behalf of these members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments in opposition to Senate Bill 651— Landlord and Tenant—Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies—Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction).

Senate Bill 651 authorizes a county to enact a local law or ordinance that prohibits a landlord of residential property from failing to renew a lease during the lease period or from terminating a holdover tenancy without good cause. The bill applies to a landlord who owns six or more residential rental units in the State, including any residential rental units that the landlord owns or controls through one or more legal entities.

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce supports housing initiatives, including affordable housing, that balance the needs of property owners and residents. We have concerns that what is proposed in House Bill 709 upsets that balance. For example, the current system prevents escalation of disputes between neighbors by giving the housing provider the flexibility to give a disruptive neighbor a notice to vacate. In the good cause system, the tenant can either ignore or disagree with the cause given, thereby requiring other neighbors to testify in court or sign affidavits against the disruptive tenant. This is particularly troublesome when said tenant is harassing or threatening neighbors.

Additionally, in the good cause system, housing providers can ask prospective tenants for any previous notices to vacate letters with the cause given because that's valuable information about why a tenant was asked to leave a property. If the reason is derogatory, it potentially makes it much harder for a tenant to find housing.

For these and other reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable vote on Senate Bill 651.