



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
SB651: Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause
Termination (Good Cause Eviction)
February 18, 2025
SUPPORT

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Chair; The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair; and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports SB651, which would allow counties to establish laws prohibiting landlords from failing to renew leases or terminate holdover tenancies without good cause. Currently, landlords can terminate a tenant or evict a tenant without providing any justification, which leads to housing instability for vulnerable families and potentially allows for inequitable practices among landlords. There is economic benefit to consider when implementing SB651. Fewer evictions mean less strain on local services, including courts and social services, which often bear the costs of homelessness and housing instability.

As advocates for economically disadvantaged and marginalized communities, our board continues to support tenants' rights and policies that remove barriers to safe, affordable housing. In Montgomery County, around 62% of renters earning less than \$50,000 annually spend over half of their income on housing, indicating a severe housing cost burden.¹ Paramedics, custodians, nursing assistants, and firefighters are examples of occupations where individuals cannot afford to live in the county they serve. In order to meet the housing needs of those with an income below 50% of AMI, 4,691 units would need to be built.²

The Montgomery County Community Action Agency, of which our board is the governing body, supports households struggling to find stable and affordable housing through the Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center and the agency's Navigation Team. Staff support residents in applying for housing vouchers and emergency rental assistance to prevent evictions and assist residents who are at risk for losing their housing for various reasons. Staff report that it is common practice for landlords to simply let a lease expire if a tenant has relied on rental assistance or if the tenant has expressed concerns about health and safety in the building, instead of addressing these issues directly. Marginalized members of our community, including undocumented residents, refugees, asylees, and families with modest incomes, are especially at risk for such unfair practices, which SB651 aims to address.

¹<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/countystat/program-inventory/housing.html>

²<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Filling%20the%20Federal%20Affordable%20Housing%20Doughnut%20Hole%20in%20the%20Greater%20DC%20Region.pdf>

It is important to note that protections for tenants are especially critical in an area like Montgomery County, and so many parts of the state, where the cost of living is so high. According to the 2023 Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard, a household with two working adults, one preschooler, and one school-age child would need to earn \$122,943 annually to cover their basic necessities, over four times the federal poverty level.³ Housing represents a significant expense for families. Policies that lead to more housing stability, like Good Cause Eviction protections, can help families move towards the Self-Sufficiency Standard.

The Montgomery County Community Action Board strongly supports SB651 and asks for the Committee's favorable report.

³ https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/MDMontCo2023_SSS.pdf
² <https://hit.handhousing.org/jurisdictions/montgomery>
³ <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Filling%20the%20Federal%20Affordable%20Housing%20Doughnut%20Hole%20in%20the%20Greater%20DC%20Region.pdf>