

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: Tenika Gilliam

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Tenika Gilliam and I am a Marylander. 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).**

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 allow 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.

This bill is important to me because unreasonable evictions only compound how hard it is for many in our community to survive. I think this bill will help bring landlords and tenants closer together to better understand one another's circumstances and the procedure for how to avoid eviction. This may help one another connect on a payment plan, understand the physical/mental health challenges a tenant may be facing, or generally better communicate what needs to be done.

I was glad that this bill includes specific freezes on evictions during extreme weather conditions. I think it is important that we include heat emergencies. There really should be a freeze on all evictions during the coldest and hottest months of the year - and a particular focus on those who are on Section 8/vouchers. We should also have safeguards in place for evictions that would be occurring in particularly dangerous neighborhoods as it leaves evicted families particularly vulnerable.

We must think of children who may be impacted by an eviction and work towards ensuring no child experiences homelessness.

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, 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 be at risk of being put out of their homes. This would mean fewer evictions for Black Maryland residents who - because of centuries of government-sponsored housing discrimination - are disproportionately impacted by evictions. 1 in 4 Black children in renting households face 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.

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.