



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Dear Distinguished Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

For the record, I am Delegate Ryan Nawrocki, requesting a favorable report on HB202 - **Criminal Law - Fraud - Conveyance, Lease, or Possession of Residential Real Property**. This legislation is a common-sense solution to protect property owners, hold criminals accountable, and restore faith in the rule of law. Unfortunately, squatting has become a growing epidemic, in some cases fueled by criminal networks that prey on innocent people with fake leases and counterfeit documents. My office was approached multiple times over the past year with instances of property owners who were unable to evict squatters in a timely manner due to the current restrictions within the law.

This issue isn't theoretical—it's personal. It affects everyday Marylanders in ways that are heartbreaking and infuriating. A family in my community recently shared their story with me. They put their home up for sale after moving out of state, believing they'd found a buyer, only to have the deal fall through because a squatter had taken over the property. Now living out of state, the family didn't even realize what had happened until it was too late. The financial loss was devastating, jeopardizing their plans and their future. Another neighbor reached out to my office after noticing squatters had moved in next door. Almost overnight, the neighborhood changed—there were safety concerns, noise disturbances, and even fire hazards. She no longer felt safe in her own home. And then there's the case of a local property owner whose tenant passed away, only to have the tenant's son—a man she didn't even know—refuse to leave. By the time she could finally evict him, the damage to her property was a staggering \$40,000.

Since announcing my bill, I have had Marylanders around the state write in support of HB202. Another property owner said he had a squatter breeding and fighting pit bulls on his property and incurred significant damage. Another Marylander told us a story about a senior citizen who had to stay in the hospital for a month. Upon return to her apartment, the locks were changed. The police weren't able to eject the squatter because of the laws, they said.

I understand that not everyone caught in this situation is a villain. Some people are victims themselves, duped into believing they had a legitimate lease. Sympathy for their plight doesn't mean turning a blind eye to the rights of property owners. My bill takes a balanced approach: it imposes stronger penalties on those who create fraudulent documents while ensuring those who are unlawfully occupying property face consequences as well. Simply put, my bill does the following:

1. **Cracks Down on Fraudsters:** Those who create fake leases and counterfeit documents will face increased penalties. These individuals are the ringleaders, and they must be stopped.
2. **Deters Criminal Behavior:** With clear penalties, including fines and jail time, this legislation will serve as a deterrent to anyone contemplating unlawful occupancy of another person's home. But this isn't just about punishment; it's about fairness. The bill also recognizes the plight of those tricked into this situation and ensures they're treated with compassion while being relocated lawfully.

These are not isolated incidents. They are a growing trend, and the impact is felt not just in financial terms but in the erosion of trust and security in our communities. Therefore, I ask for a favorable report for HB202.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ryan Nawrocki".