

## HB271 - Real Property – Expedited Wrongful Detainer Proceedings- Property for Sale or Lease

Hearing before the House Judiciary Committee

March 5, 2025

Position: OPPOSED (UNF)

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Spencer Baldacci is a part of Renters United Maryland, which strongly opposes HB 271 because it deprives lawful residents of their constitutional due process right to adequate notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard before terminating any property interest in the home. HB 271 eliminates the requirement for mailing of the complaint to the resident as part of process. Additionally, by requiring that trial occur within 5 days of filing, *regardless of when the resident is actually served with the complaint*, residents will not get notice of the pending trial with adequate time to prepare a defense and obtain legal representation. The expedited appeal timeline is not practical either. **These elements of HB 271 ensure that lawful residents and tenants will have no real opportunity to be heard and present their defense, thereby resulting in legal tenants being illegally evicted from their homes.**

Maryland’s current wrongful detainer court process provides due process to all parties, and no one has provided data to support expediting this process in a way that strips lawful residents and tenants of their constitutional due process rights.

**Predatory landlords will abuse the expedited nature of this process to evict tenants that they know are not squatters.** And landlords who threaten to report tenants as squatters will prompt plenty of tenants to vacate – even if that means homelessness – for fear of having the police called to their residences. Wrongful detainer actions are also used and abused by parties involved in domestic disputes. All of these bad actors will be emboldened by a sham process that does not provide the defendant meaningful notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard prior to terminating their right to possess the home.

[Up to 25% of families who are evicted become homeless.](#) Becoming homeless is even more likely for residents evicted after a rental scam because those residents are often the most desperate for affordable housing. Homelessness has a devastating impact, leading to [negative education outcomes for children, increased foster care, job loss, and poor health outcomes.](#)

**Hb 271 will have a disparate impact on Black, woman-led households.** Maryland’s long history of housing segregation and discriminatory policies mean that Black and Brown Marylanders are much more likely to be renters and at risk of eviction, and therefore more likely to be most in need of affordable housing and victims of rental scams. [73% of MD households](#)

[that obtained eviction prevention funds in the pandemic's wake identified as Black, and 71% identified as being woman-led.](#)

**There is no data to support this bill. The General Assembly should conduct a summer study.** This Committee is operating in a total absence of data related to Wrongful Detainer and the prevalence of squatting. How long does it take for a wrongful detainer complaint to be heard in court? How long from judgment to eviction? What best practices could sheriffs and courts adopt in wrongful detainer cases? How can Maryland better assist victims of rental scams?

I, Spencer Baldacci, a current renter in Baltimore City, strongly oppose HB 271 and urge as **unfavorable report**.