



House Bill 271

Date: March 3, 2025
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Position: Favorable with Amendment

This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose membership consists of owners and managers of more than 207,246 rental housing homes in more than 937 apartment communities. Our members house over 667,000 residents of the State of Maryland throughout the entire State of Maryland. MMHA membership also includes more than 216 associate members that supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry. More information is available at <https://www.mmhaonline.org/>

House Bill 271 (“HB 271”) requires the courts to expedite the process for wrongful detainer cases if the property in question is actively listed for rent or sale. Under the expedited process, the District Court shall order the squatter to appear before the court no more than five days after the complaint is filed. The District Court is then required to issue a ruling on the complaint within two days after the hearing. Once judgment is entered, an appeal may be filed with the Circuit Court within two days of the judgement. A hearing for the appeal must be set within three days after the application for appeal.

HB 271 addresses a growing concern in Maryland’s real estate market, namely that an owner’s rights are at risk, and they become entangled with a squatter, with whom there is no contractual relationship. Many times, squatters create elaborate fraud schemes which negatively impact legitimate property owners, landlords, and real estate companies. HB 271 will help elevate the importance of these cases and bring a quicker resolution.

According to policy guidance from the Baltimore City Police Department, some squatter cases simply involve a trespasser who has knowingly entered a residence looking for a place to stay without permission from the property owner. In that scenario, it is possible for the trespasser or squatter to be removed from the property by law enforcement; however, squatters have become savvy. They are falsifying leases, deeds, or other property records to provide fraudulent proof of residency to police. In these instances, property owners are referred to District Court, and in the interim, trespassers cannot be ejected from the property.¹

HB 271 will create a mechanism to allow property owners to swiftly reclaim the premises, so they can move forward with a legitimate sale or lease. As such, MMHA requests a favorable report on HB 271. Please contact Matthew Pipkin, Jr. at mpipkin@mmhaonline.org or Ashley Clark at ashley.clark@mdlobbyist.com with any questions or concerns. Thank you.

¹ [Squatters and Property Fraud Schemes | Baltimore Police Department](#)