

HB179: Organized Retail Theft of 2025

Judiciary Committee – January 21, 2025

Sponsors: Toles, Grammer, Hartman, Kaufman, and Wu

Position: FAVORABLE

**Testimony on Behalf of Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield (URW)
(Westfield Montgomery Mall, Westfield Wheaton Mall)**

Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield operates more than eighty locations in 12 countries, including fifteen in the United States such as Montgomery Mall and Wheaton Mall here in Maryland. The two Maryland properties generate millions in dollars of tax revenues for the state and local governments per year.

Background:

Organized retail crime is the large-scale theft of retail merchandise with the intent to resell the items for financial gain. Organized retail crime often involves a criminal enterprise employing a group of individuals who steal large quantities of merchandise from multiple stores and a fencing operation that converts the stolen goods into cash. In addition to the cost of lost merchandise, there is also the potential for property damage and the threat to employee and customer safety.

In response to the increase in retail theft, Congress passed the INFORM Act that went into effect in June of 2023. The law requires online marketplaces to verify the identities of high-volume third-party sellers which will help curb the fencing of stolen merchandise.

HB179 will contribute to the effort to curtail organized retail theft by allowing charges for multiple thefts committed in multiple counties as part of an organized effort to be joined and prosecuted in any county in which one of the thefts occurred.

Westfield requests your SUPPORT for HB179.

For any questions or more information regarding Westfield's position, please contact Jamie Gregory at jgregory@lhstrategy.com or 202-841-3567.