

Testimony before the Maryland Senate

Regarding HB774 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local
Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)
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Good afternoon:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to participate at today's hearing.

My name is Kathryn Howell. I am an associate professor of Urban Planning at the University of Maryland with more than 20 years of expertise in housing as both a researcher and a practitioner. In addition, I am the executive director of the National Center for Smart Growth where we conduct practice-relevant and partner-driven research on issues related to housing, transportation, small business and land use.

Good Cause is a critical tool for the prevention of displacement and the acknowledgement that renters have a critical stake in their communities. Researchers from the University of Minnesota conducted the [first analysis of the impact of Good Cause Eviction Protections on development](#). The analysis finds no evidence that the introduction of Good Cause Eviction Protections in California, Oregon, and New Hampshire resulted in a decline of new construction. Additionally, preexisting research has found Good Cause Eviction Protections lead to a statistically significant *decrease in evictions* ([Cuellar 2019](#), see Figure 3) and *decrease in displacement* ([Hwang et al. 2022](#)).

At the same time, economists have recently found that rent stabilization can directly *reduce rent prices by 4-6%* and *does not reduce the supply of housing* ([Jofre-Monseny et al. 2023](#)). In other words, rational rent stabilization, along with good cause can create predictability for renter households - something I'm sure many of you also want for your families. By knowing that, if they follow the rules, they can stay in their homes, parents can engage more comfortably in their children's schools and their neighborhoods, and, more importantly, they can relax and plan for the future, knowing that they don't have to nervously await a notice from their landlord.

I know that this moment has been challenging for developers trying to build due to widespread rising costs of development and operation of housing, including land, labor, materials and insurance, but using tenants as a stand-in conflates correlation and causation in the data.

This is really important for our backyard at NCSG, the Purple Line corridor in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. This area has historically held some of the most affordable unsubsidized rental housing stock in the otherwise high-cost Washington metropolitan region. However, researchers have shown that residential rents within a half mile of the Purple Line are now [rising at a disproportionately rapid rate](#) even before rail service begins, likely due to anticipation of the future value of the land on which these homes sit. Rising property values and new rent stabilization policies create incentives for landlords to maximize profits through tenant turnover. This puts current Purple Line tenants at risk of displacement - and indeed homelessness when landlords choose not to renew a lease *because they cannot find replacement housing at an affordable cost*. Such evictions can cause irreparable harm to families and disrupt entire communities.

In my research on evictions in Virginia, my colleagues and I found that the costs of eviction, regardless of the reason, are borne both by tenants and the public at large - with the public cost per family of more than \$7,000 when you calculate the cost of health care, shelter, incarceration, social services and education disruption.

Passing this legislation is important for the wellbeing of the communities along the Purple Line and throughout the state of Maryland, and I encourage your support of HB774. Thank you, and please contact me at klhowell@umd.edu if you wish to discuss further.