

Testimony in Support of HB774-Good Cause Eviction

Favorable

Dear House Economic Matters Committee

My name is Robert Alex Stubblefield and I am a poet, lay minister and activist-organizer with a variety of organizations including The Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition, Moco Liberation Collective, Black United Front among others. Additionally I am also a Maryland resident and I am writing in support of HB774-Landlord and Tenant-Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies-Local Good Cause Termination(Good Cause Eviction). My reasons are cited below.

The first reason why I am supporting this bill is because it's necessary. Homeowners and renters regardless of race, class, and zip code deserve to put down roots and build community. This is vital if we're going to make Maryland a place where people can live and thrive. However in FY 2025, landlords across the state filed around 5,000 "no cause" or tenant holding over cases which when compared to 2019, is a 42% increase. This is wrong because how can we make and build community when people are being evicted without cause? Make it make sense. A Clean SB462 would allow local jurisdictions to pass Good Cause Evictions laws and prevent families from being evicted unless a landlord, corporate or other can provide a legitimate reason. Opponents will say that counties can either have rent stabilization or good cause but not both. This is a false choice as we all know it's not either or, it's both and. Not only do we need stable homes so people can build home equity and stable families, but we also need stable rents so that people are not being priced out of community.

The second reason why I support this is because it is essential for good housing. Evictions, as I have seen as an organizer and minister are not just financially costly to families with the cost moving expenses, transferring schools in the middle of the school year and trying to find a new place to stay, but also the emotional, mental and spiritual cost that it causes. Research shows that displacement of this kind creates trauma for families especially children who are in a development stage of their life. Every dollar that is spent on prevention returns exactly \$2.39 to the state of Maryland. Considering that per Governor Moore that the state is broke and in a deficit, we could use all the savings we can get. Opponents of this will say that Good Cause will cause a detrimental impact on housing developments. However research done not only by Loyola University that Good Cause legislation has no effect on development as they studied Good Cause in states such as New Hampshire, California and Oregon and whether some have rent stabilization or not, it doesn't matter Good Cause has no effect.

Any amendments that would force counties and other local jurisdictions to choose between rent stabilization or stable homes. It's a false choice as stated previously and as an added fact helps prevent rent gouging which landlords are notorious in engaging in to line their pockets.

In summary HB774 empowers local jurisdictions to require transparency and accountability from landlords who will and have been documented in engaging in discriminatory acts. Whether it's a person with disabilities or tenants who try to organize around issues preventing slumlords. We cannot ignore the fact that black families continue to bear the brunt of the threat of evictions. It is high time we hold these corporate landlords accountable for rigging and gaming the system as long as they have.

Thank you