

**Long Branch Housing Action Team (LBHAT)**  
**HB 774 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)**

**Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee, February 26, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT (FAV)**

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**Long Branch Housing Action Team (LBHAT) is part of Renters United Maryland and urges the House Economic Matters Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 774.**

My name is Lisa Büttner and I have lived in Long Branch for 22 years. My son has attended our neighborhood schools since Kindergarten and is now a senior at Blair. I have worked with the community-based nonprofit CHEER since 2020, when impacts of Covid on our most vulnerable neighbors became unbearable to witness.

During these years I have had the privilege of coming to know dozens of neighbors who rent apartments within ¼ mile of my house. I have heard story after story about the appalling housing conditions that many of them endure for fear of retaliation should they complain. I have seen many of these apartments, have smelled gas upon entering a multi-unit building and have called 911; have felt the oppressive heat when the AC units don't work; have seen water streaks from leaky windows and heard many times about maintenance covering over moldy walls with a layer of paint, only for the mold to emerge again. Would you tolerate any of these conditions?

Among the most nauseating and infuriating ongoing cases is that of Blanca, a single mother of 4 children from 4th grade to 12th grade attending four separate Montgomery County schools (one of her children needs extra support). Blanca works three part-time jobs to cover her bills and to do work in the community which she loves. She loves nature and seeks out opportunities for her children to get scholarships for outdoor summer camp, among other enrichment activities.

Blanca and her 4 kids live in a 2-bedroom apartment in a 4-unit building that is walking distance from the elementary school that her daughter attends. They have lived there for 5 years. For the past 2 years, the cockroach population in Blanca's apartment has exploded. Every day she is confronted with hundreds of roaches. She has tried reporting the problem to the landlord, who has been unresponsive for over a year, and she is afraid to complain anymore because she fears eviction. The infestation has driven out all the other renters in the building, but Blanca doesn't want to move because she doesn't know of any other affordable apartments close to the school, and doesn't want to disrupt her children's lives.

Blanca cannot bear for her children to get sick or be traumatized by so many roaches everywhere. So for many months, she has been spending **\$200/month (!!)** on roach poison, only to have the population bounce back. She has described using "bombs"/foggers that she is

needing to use increasingly often - now **twice a month!** I am gravely concerned about the toxins that she and her kids are exposed to with this frequent use of fumigators that release pesticides in the form of a mist. She uses one in the kitchen and every other room of the apartment. She does it before she leaves for work when the kids are at school, and puts the cat in a separate room. When she returns she says she wipes things down. She says she does not wear a mask (she didn't think of that risk), and I cannot imagine how much more she exposes herself when she attempts to wipe things off, when she can't possibly get all surfaces. And she says she gets headaches. I can't imagine how much the kids and cat are inhaling/ingesting as well from things like the couch, sheets, etc. Blanca is spending a huge portion of her very hard-earned income to combat an infestation that is systemic and clearly requires an all-building solution, putting herself and her kids at risk of high exposure to dangerous chemicals. But this won't happen without a landlord who cares about his tenants' lives. And from the stories I have heard, I am certain there are dozens of families in Long Branch in a similar situation.

Blanca is too afraid to report the landlord, for fear she will be evicted or have her rent increased beyond what she can afford.

**I urge you to please support HB 774, Good Cause Eviction, so that renters can demand humane living conditions without fear of eviction.**