



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WILL JAWANDO
COUNCILMEMBER AT-LARGE
CHAIR, EDUCATION & CULTURE COMMITTEE
PLANNING, HOUSING, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

February 17, 2026

Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando
Testimony Supporting HB0434 (Residential Leases - Use of Algorithmic Device by Landlord to
Determine Rent, Occupancy, and Lease Terms - Prohibition)

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

I am writing to share my strong support for HB0434 and also to share with you information regarding a similar bill I recently introduced in the Montgomery County Council. Such legislation is important to prohibit algorithmic price fixing and collusion that artificially drives up the cost of rental housing. I urge the committee to advance this bill because Maryland renters deserve to know their rent is set by the market, not manipulated by an algorithm.

As you know, the cost of housing is a top concern for most of our residents. One aspect of addressing that critical issue is by cracking down on and preventing noncompetitive practices that drive up rents. In this vein, in the last several years, there has been extensive litigation at the federal and state level against companies using algorithmic software to collude on the cost of rent and other lease terms. I am thankful to our Attorney General Anthony Brown for being a leader in this area, filing suit in 2025 against a company that sold algorithmic software as well as several residential landlords alleged to have used such software to raise the rent on thousands of Maryland residents.

It is important that legislation follows such lawsuits to make clear that such algorithmic collusion is prohibited in Maryland and will be penalized. As you know, HB0434 would prohibit a landlord from using certain algorithmic devices to determine the amount of rent to charge, occupancy levels of, and lease terms and conditions for a residential dwelling unit and make a violation an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice under the Maryland Consumer Protection Act. The legislation I introduced at the county level, Bill 8-26, Landlord-Tenant Relations – Prohibition Against Price Coordination and

Rent-Setting Algorithms, is similar, but somewhat broader substantively because as introduced it applies to certain use of public as well as non-public information.¹

This state legislative session is rightfully focused on issues related to affordability for our residents, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet in an environment of economic instability and concerns about the future. Addressing housing affordability issues is a key aspect of being responsive to residents' needs. HB0434 would also be an excellent complement to other affordability-related proposals, such as Governor Wes Moore's proposal to address dynamic pricing for groceries, another area where technology is being used to make life more expensive for residents.²

Renters deserve to know that when they sign a lease, the price reflects the actual market, not a backroom algorithm. That's what this bill does, and that's why it matters. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony, and I would be happy to discuss the state or county legislative proposals with you if that would be helpful. You may contact me at councilmember.jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Jawando', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Will Jawando

¹ https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=169&event_id=16717&meta_id=211124

² <https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press/pages/Governor-Moore-Announces-Legislation-to-Protect-Marylanders%E2%80%99-Pocketbooks.-Data-Privacy-at-the-Grocery-Store.aspx>