



**HB 59 - Real Property – Expedited Wrongful Detainer Proceedings – Property for Sale or Lease¹
Hearing of the House Economic Matters Committee**

February 5, 2026

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR), an organization founded by physicians with over 800 supporters, oppose HB59 because it would facilitate more evictions with fewer protections for renters. Though our mission is to address the greatest public health threats of all, nuclear war and climate change, we are also committed locally to addressing environmental injustice and health disparities. Health disparities may arise from problems with lack of employment, lack of educational opportunities, unhealthy environments, but nothing is more central to causing health disparities than housing insecurity. Evictions represent the worst outcome of housing insecurity. These are our patients. Evictions interfere with patients ability to keep appointments, get medication, partake of preventive care, stay healthy and even to stay alive especially during heat waves and cold spells. Though sheriffs may pause evictions during extreme weather events, that does not protect those who have already been evicted.

HB 59 will deny renters a meaningful opportunity to be heard in certain eviction cases and lead to more evictions and homelessness. This bill does not even require a landlord to be licensed which should disqualify the landlord from using the courts to seek remedy. Families may rent from someone believed to be the landlord but is an intermediary or someone flipping the property and they may be paying rent as they are supposed to. These are not squatters but will be treated like squatters by this bill. It is very disturbing that the claim of an epidemic of squatters is not only unsubstantiated but driven by motives increasing rental profits as reported in the Baltimore Banner² this year: the fact is, this exaggerated drumbeat around squatting prioritizes profits over people and their housing security.” This false drumbeat is eerily similar to what we are hearing about immigrants and crime.

A recent study³ underscores how children suffer when evictions occur. For newborn infants this includes preterm birth and low birthweight. For older children worse developmental scores, poorer memory, and lower rates of testing for lead levels were noted. Even living in a neighborhood with higher evictions rates had some of these negative outcomes. From another study⁴, adult renters living with one or more children were threatened with eviction at twice the

¹ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-frm-asst-sec-111918.html>

² <https://www.baltimorebrew.com/2026/01/05/exaggerated-reporting-about-squatters-benefits-landlord-profits-over-tenant-rights/>

³ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2803667>

⁴ <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2305860120>

rate of those without children. This study also documented the racial injustice of evictions. Black Americans accounted for over 51% of those evicted though making up 18.6% of the renter population.

In addition to the filing of a civil case for wrongful detainer, law enforcement already has the tools it needs to effectively prosecute squatting as well as dishonest people who deceive renters into leasing properties.

More housing for lower income Marylanders is needed,⁵ not expedited evictions.

Renters are people with families, dreams, and health care needs. They are our patients. We must respect their rights too. Without housing, they cannot stay healthy.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility urge you to oppose HB 59 and deliver an **unfavorable report**.

Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH

President, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

January 30, 2026

<https://www.chesapeakepsr.org/>

⁵ <https://news.maryland.gov/dhcd/2025/07/24/state-of-maryland-releases-2025-housing-needs-assessment/>