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## HB 774 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)

Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee, Feb. 26, 2026

### Position: FAVORABLE

Public Justice Center is part of Renters United Maryland and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 774.

Whether homeowner or renter – across race, class, and zip code – all Marylanders deserve the chance to put down roots in our communities. Yet, in FY 2025, landlords filed 4,462 “no cause” or “tenant holding over” eviction cases – a 42% increase since 2019. HB 774 would allow local jurisdictions to pass Good Cause Eviction laws and prevent families from being evicted unless a corporate landlord provides a legitimate reason. We urge the Committee to pass a clean HB 774 and reject any amendment that would force counties and renters to choose between having strong rent stabilization and good cause eviction protections. This is a false choice. **We need stable rents and stable homes.**

The centrality of good cause eviction to affordable housing is best illustrated by the families who have suffered from arbitrary, retaliatory, or discriminatory evictions:

- Rebecca Clausen, a 30-year combat veteran of the armed services, a mother to three teenage daughters, and a longtime resident of Anne Arundel County reported severe mold, flooding, chipping lead paint, and rodents to her landlord and then to the County. Her landlord responded by issuing her a notice to terminate her tenancy. Ms. Clausen retained one of the best landlord-tenant lawyers in the state, but lost at trial, and lost on appeal. As she noted in her testimony last year: “I served my country honorably for 30 years, including combat service. Yet, the very laws and freedoms in Maryland that I stood up to defend have failed my family. My children and I have been forced to endure hazardous living conditions, retaliation, and now eviction because the laws allow landlords to hide. Now, because of this eviction record, landlords are declining our applications to rent another home. As a result, we will become one of the thousands of homeless families in Maryland.”

- Naima Robinson-Chaney is a mother of three children living in Baltimore City. Ms. Robinson-Chaney stood up to the landlord in court because the landlord was charging her illegal fees. She won her case, and the landlord responded with a notice to terminate her tenancy. The panic, sleeplessness night, and terror that her children experienced at the possibility of becoming homeless was detailed in her testimony last year. She concluded that testimony: “If this law had been in place, my landlord would have to state **why** – after I paid the rent every month – they want me and my children to have to leave. And the only reason they would be able to give is that I finally stood up to them. Please pass this important legislation.”

**Good Cause is essential to affordable housing.** Nothing is more costly to families than eviction – moving expenses, finding a new home with few options, transferring schools in the middle of the year. [Every dollar spent on eviction prevention returns \\$2.39 to the state from reduced social safety net costs related to homelessness.](#)

Researchers from Loyola University Maryland and others found that [Good Cause has no impact on housing development](#) after examining how Good Cause works in NH, OR, & CA. Some of these jurisdictions have rent stabilization; some do not. It does not matter.

**Please reject any amendment that forces renters/counties to choose between stable rents (rent stabilization with vacancy control) and stable homes (good cause eviction).** Rent stabilization with vacancy control protects renters from rent-gouging and keeps rents lower for decades. Without vacancy control (i.e., a 10% cap on rent increases even when the home becomes vacant), rent stabilization does not work as well. [Rents rise dramatically when the tenant vacates, so corporate landlords have more incentive to find “good cause” for an eviction.](#) There is no evidence that reasonable rent stabilization with vacancy control and an exemption for new construction affects housing production.

## TOP MARKETS FOR PRODUCTION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

From 2020-2024, among the Top 10 producers of new affordable housing, 6 markets have enacted Good Cause Eviction, Rent Stabilization, or both.

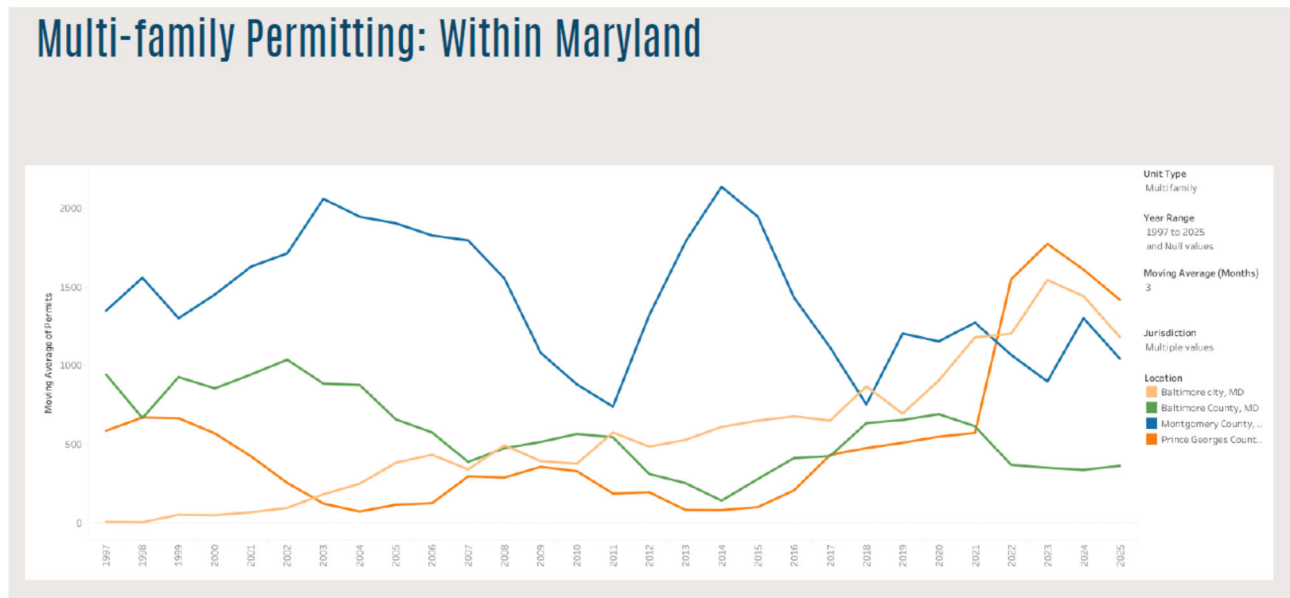
Source: RentCafe's analysis of Yardi data, 2015 - 2024

	Market name	New affordable apartments*	Total apartment completions*	Share of affordable apartments*
1	Seattle, WA	14,290	59,004	24.22%
2	New York City, NY	14,240	44,921	31.70%
3	Austin, TX	13,343	94,250	14.16%
4	Twin Cities, MN	10,722	56,834	18.87%
5	Atlanta, GA	10,486	94,471	11.10%
6	Denver, CO	10,253	72,769	14.09%
7	Los Angeles, CA	9,406	45,787	20.54%
8	Bay Area, CA	9,169	45,578	20.12%
9	San Antonio, TX	9,015	38,153	23.63%
10	Miami, FL	8,690	45,278	19.19%

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At least [48 local elected officials oppose this false choice amendment](#). In March 2025, these local elected officials – including a majority of the Montgomery County, Prince George’s County, and Baltimore City councils as well as the chief executives in Montgomery County, Anne Arundel County, and Baltimore City, – signed a letter to the General Assembly opposing any bill that would force their counties to choose between vacancy control and good cause eviction.

New housing construction is falling throughout the state and nation – not because of rent stabilization but because of zoning and land use laws, NIMBYism, permit delays, construction costs, and a [host of development issues detailed in the Maryland Comptroller’s report](#)



**HB 774 is local enabling legislation *only*** – untying the hands of counties so that they can pass good cause eviction legislation if they want to and give residents the opportunity to stay rooted in their communities if they are abiding by the lease. If a county chooses to pass good cause, they will then integrate the new law into alignment with other local policies to meet local needs. Eight other states – including Colorado and New York last year – and 23 counties and cities have passed good cause eviction laws. Maryland is only one of 5 states that explicitly prohibits counties from passing good cause eviction.

When corporate landlords engage in no-cause evictions, families cannot stay rooted in their schools, jobs, and support networks; and, renters do not report hazardous conditions out of fear of eviction. The whole neighborhood suffers.

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**Good cause requires transparency and accountability from corporate landlords for why they are choosing to evict a tenant.** Some corporate landlords will non-renew a lease out of a discriminatory motive, i.e., wanting to evict a family who has a voucher or discrimination based on family status (having children), race, disability, or sexual orientation. Tenants can also face eviction as retaliation if they try to organize and demand repairs to dangerous living conditions. Proving discrimination or retaliation is almost impossible, especially in district court where tenants do not have access to discovery tools like requests for production of documents and depositions.

Black families bear the brunt of these evictions. [1 in 4 Black children in renting households face the threat of eviction each year due to structural and systemic racism.](#)

SB 462 is targeted at large corporate landlords who have rigged the system for too long. The bill explicitly exempts landlords who own 5 or fewer rental units in Maryland.

[Up to 25% of households who are evicted become homeless.](#) Good Cause Eviction is a no-cost way for Maryland to prevent more families from becoming homeless at a time in which the federal government is shredding the social safety net.

**For these reasons and more, the American Bar Association Supports “Just Cause” Eviction Policy.** In 2022, the American Bar Association (ABA) endorsed “just cause eviction” policies as one of “[Ten Guidelines for Residential Eviction Laws.](#)” As reported in the ABA resolution:

When such good cause requirements are absent renters and their families lack basic security of tenure. Forcing a household to relocate imposes significant disruption and potential hardship on the tenant, and should not be allowed without a legitimate reason. Allowing eviction without cause invites abuse, enabling a discriminatory, retaliatory, or otherwise illegitimate motive for ending a tenancy to be easily concealed behind a “no cause” eviction.

American Bar Association, House of Delegates Resolution 612, 9-10.

Public Justice Center asks that the Committee issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 774

Testimony on HB 709 Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover  
Tenancies – Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)  
Hearing of the Environment and Transportation Committee, February 18, 2025  
Position: **Favorable**

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Committee Members:

My name is Rebecca Clausen. I am a single parent to three teenage daughters; a decorated, 30-year, 100% permanently and totally disabled Medical Service Corps combat veteran; a former senior federal GS employee and Class of 2010 Presidential Management Fellow; and a resident of Anne Arundel County since 2012. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 709. My family has endured severe hardships due to Maryland's toothless tenant protections, which have allowed landlords to retaliate against us and fail to meet their legal obligations without any consequences.

Unlike the vast majority of Marylanders facing eviction, I have been represented by an attorney, which has been critical in navigating the legal system, but it was not enough. It can never be enough because landlords hide behind their silence and wall of privilege and evict families without having to state a legitimate reason. *Good cause eviction flips that script by requiring landlords to show why they want to evict the renter.*

**Hazardous Living Conditions.** This issue is not an issue of poverty or bad tenants, nor is it confined to Baltimore. My family and I are stellar tenants who have faced systemic failures in Maryland's housing laws and judicial system. These failures have left us vulnerable to unsafe living conditions, retaliatory actions, and a lack of accountability for landlords. Since leasing a home in Gambrills, Maryland that is less than one mile from our schools (AMS and AHS) - my family has faced a series of egregious violations by our landlord, SMD Management, LLC (aka SMD Capital Group). These violations have not only jeopardized our safety but have also exposed the systemic failures of Maryland's legal system.

I have reported the hazardous issues below to the landlord and local agencies:

- Repeated flooding with ankle-deep rainwater entering the basement causing extensive mold and damage to our personal possessions.
- Leaking pipes and toilets in the kitchen and bathrooms have caused dangerous water damage and additional, prolific mold growth. This has caused respiratory issues, allergic reactions, and long-term health risks for my family.
- Failure to repair chipping lead paint and provide the mandated lead certificate from the MD Dept. of the Environment.
- Structural defects including rotting floors, holes in the walls, and exposed electrical wiring.
- Severe rodent infestation coming from 2-foot holes in the ceiling.

The Health Department, Housing Protection Services, Md. Dept. of the Environment, mold experts, and pest experts have been to the property and documented these issues. The government agencies have issued multiple violation notices and citations, but have not imposed any of the fines outlined in the citations.

**Retaliation and Lack of Landlord Accountability.** Instead of making the needed repairs, and just 14 days after being cited for dozens of unremediated housing code violations, the landlord issued a notice of lease nonrenewal. We fought the eviction case in court, and my lawyer did the best that she could, but we lost. It's almost impossible to prove that someone else acted out of retaliation, and there is never a so-called "smoking" gun. Landlords are not made to prove anything – and so we lost and my family is facing imminent eviction.

The constant threats of eviction and unsafe living conditions have caused significant emotional distress, anxiety, and sleepless nights for my family. Mental health care is inextricably intertwined with rental health care. Not to mention that it is next to impossible to find a new rental home with an eviction judgment on your rental history. I've applied and applied and been rejected repeatedly because of this eviction judgment. I honestly do not know where we are going to go.

The worst part is that the landlord has ignored the citations from Housing Protection Services and MDE, and refused to fix any of these critical health and safety violations including lead hazards and severe mold growth. So I know that the next renting family in this home is going to endure the same severe threats to their health and safety and the same retaliation and eviction when they try to stand up for themselves.

**The Need for HB 709.** HB 709 is essential to protect tenants like me from retaliatory actions and ensure that landlords are held accountable for maintaining safe and habitable housing. Anti-retaliation laws will never work when the tenant has to prove what the landlord is thinking when they move to evict you. Without good cause eviction, tenants remain vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as my family's experience demonstrates.

**Conclusion.** I served my country honorably for 30 years, including combat service. Yet, the very laws and freedoms in Maryland that I stood up to defend have failed my family. My children and I have been forced to endure hazardous living conditions, retaliation, and now eviction because the laws allow landlords to hide. Now, because of this eviction record, landlords are declining our applications to rent another home. As a result, we will become one of the thousands of homeless families in Maryland.

HB 709 represents a vital step toward ensuring that all Maryland residents have access to safe, stable, and equitable housing. I strongly urge the committee to vote in support.

Rebecca Clausen

Testimony on HB 709 Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies –  
Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)  
Hearing of the Environment and Transportation Committee, February 18, 2025  
Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee

My name is Naima Robinson-Chaney, and I am asking you to pass the Good Cause Eviction bill. I live with my three teenage children in a home that we rent in Baltimore City, at least for now. I have been told by my landlord, a property management company, that my children and I have to leave. Earlier this month they sent me a notice to vacate in the next 60 days without giving me any reason why.

But I know the reason. I finally stood up to them. I was paying my rent timely every month, but they kept saying that I was behind on the rent. When I finally got a ledger of charges and payments from them, I learned that they charged me for an \$800 water bill that I had never seen before as well as a bunch of illegal fees – an administrative fee, excessive late fees, and legal fees. I've begged them to add me to the water bill account so that I can get help from the City's Water For All program. They've refused. I got an attorney to help me fight a failure to pay rent case in court because the landlord was taking my rent money and putting it to the illegal fees. We won the case! And then within 30 days of winning the case, they sent me the 60-day notice to terminate my rental.

Where will we go? The father of my children passed, and we live on a fixed income. I'm losing sleep, my children are losing sleep, and we're all on edge. Where are we going to go? All I want is to sleep somewhere safe and stable. But every time I ask the landlord questions about the fees or the lease, they refuse to respond. Instead, they just send me more harassing notices and add on more fees.

I don't want to move again. I don't want the kids to have to change schools again. I wanted to start my own childcare center, and I'm taking classes to become certified. But if I don't have a safe place to live, how can I become more financially secure?

I support the Good Cause Eviction bill. If this law had been in place, my landlord would have to state **why** – after I paid the rent every month – they want me and my children to have to leave. And the only reason they would be able to give is that I finally stood up to them. Please pass this important legislation.

Thank you

Naima Robinson-Chaney