



C. Matthew Hill
Attorney
Public Justice Center
201 North Charles Street, Suite 1200
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
410-625-9409, ext. 229
hillm@publicjustice.org

SB 12 - Residential Rental Apartments - Air-Conditioning Requirements

Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee on Apr. 1, 2026

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that stands with tenants to protect and expand their rights to safe, habitable, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing and their rights to fair and equal treatment by Maryland's landlord-tenant laws, courts, and agencies. We represent or advise over 800 renter households each year, and we advocate to change laws to further a human right to housing.

SB 12 is an important step to ensuring Maryland renters have a safe home but needs a critical amendment to avoid preempting local laws that require A/C in a broader range of rental properties. Montgomery County Code (Sections 26-7 and 29-30) and Prince George's County Code (Sec. 13-162.02) both require working air conditioning in virtually all residential rental properties (except single-family in Montgomery County). These requirements would be superseded by SB 12, which only applies to new construction or substantial rehabilitation. **Montgomery and Prince George's County residents would lose access to air conditioning under SB 12. Further, other counties would be pre-empted from following the lead of Montgomery and Prince Georges in protecting their residents from the significant negative health consequences of lack of air conditioning. And, counties would be pre-empted from lowering the maximum temperature of 80 degrees provided for in HB 12 – a maximum temperature that is far too high for Maryland's senior citizens and other vulnerable residents.**

Maryland often sets the floor for discrimination and consumer protection laws but then allows counties the flexibility to create high standards or more protections for their residents. SB 12's preemption amendment flies in the face of this longstanding practice. We urge the House to strike SB 12's preemption language and conform to HB 153 which clarifies that the bill sets a floor, not a ceiling.

Public Justice Center asks that the Committee **issue a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report on SB 12.**