



**HB 774 - Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination
(Good Cause Eviction)
Hearing of the House Economic Matters Committee
February 26, 2026 at 1:00PM
Position: SUPPORT (FAV)**

The Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland ("PBRC"), an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the statewide thought leader and clearinghouse for pro bono civil legal services in Maryland. As the designated pro bono arm of the MSBA, PBRC provides training, mentorship, and pro bono service opportunities to members of the private bar and offers direct legal services to over 5,000 clients annually.

In May 2017, with a grant from the Maryland Judiciary's Access to Justice Department, PBRC launched the Tenant Volunteer Lawyer of the Day ("TVLD") Program, now called the Tenant Justice Program (TJP), in Baltimore City Rent Court to provide day-of-court legal representation to tenants. Since then, this continually expanding Program has allowed PBRC staff and volunteer attorneys to represent thousands of tenants in both Baltimore City and Baltimore County in multiple types of legal actions that could result in eviction. An overarching goal of this Program is to promote and preserve stable housing for low-income tenants in Maryland. PBRC supports HB 774 because it represents a vital step toward the achievement of this goal by allowing policymakers to enact local laws outlining the kind of "good cause" policy that their locality needs. Without this enabling bill, counties are preempted from enacting legal protections for Maryland families who face increasingly unstable housing.

Maryland is currently a "no cause" state, which means that a landlord can decide to non-renew a lease without any stated cause. Thus, working families and their children face the constant threat of displacement, even when they follow all the rules. **In our experience working with tenants in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, we have seen far too many clients who avoid a judgment in court only to find themselves struggling to find new housing anyway because their landlord then refuses to renew their lease (possibly to get a higher rent, to avoid making requested repairs, or simply due to personality conflicts).** We have worked with tenants who are elderly and have lived in the same place for decades as well as those who are young families with a desire to stay in the same neighborhood due to job and school connections. In addition to being uprooted from their community and forced into an expensive move (including having to pay a few months' rent up front plus a security deposit, utility deposits, etc.), many of our clients simply cannot find suitable housing that they can afford. We have also worked with clients who decline to bring valid escrow or habitability claims, challenge illegal fees or even request additional time to pay rent because they worry that doing so will result in the landlord's refusal to renew their lease. **Too many of our clients must choose between asserting their rights and risking a lease termination.**

Local Good Cause legislation can address these issues by allowing local jurisdictions to require a landlord to disclose the reason for choosing not to renew a lease. HB 774 provides a list of options for what would constitute "good cause," but leaves the specifics up to the local jurisdictions. The allowable "good cause" provisions may include a substantial breach of lease, disorderly conduct, illegal activity, refusing to grant landlord access to the home, removal of the property from the rental market or a desire to recover the premises for family use. Requiring landlords to disclose the reason for a lease non-renewal provides security to tenants and helps ensure that no eviction takes place under a cover of silence that can hide discriminatory intent. HB 774's list reflects the policies other U.S. jurisdictions, including eight

other states and 23 counties and cities, have passed. Maryland is one of only five states that explicitly prohibits counties from passing good cause eviction laws.

We urge the Committee to pass a clean HB 774 and reject any poison pill amendment that would force counties to choose between rent stabilization with vacancy control and good cause eviction protections. Rent stabilization with vacancy control protects communities from rent-gouging and keeps rents lower for decades, creating more stable rents, whereas good cause laws maintain individual tenants' housing stability by allowing them to stay in their homes if they are paying their rent and fulfilling their lease requirements. Thus choosing between the two is a false choice. Maryland families need stable rents and stable homes.

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 legislation, they will then integrate the new law into alignment with other local policies to meet local needs. Maryland should not stand in the way.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 774.

For the above reasons,

PBRC urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 774.

Please contact Katherine Davis, Director of PBRC's Courtroom Advocacy Project, with any questions.

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