



**HB1456: Consumer Protection - Residential Property Advertisement -
Ownership Verification**

Position: Favorable

April 1, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, Senate Finance

Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

Economic Action Maryland Fund urges a favorable report on HB1456, which would protect tenants and landlords from pervasive online rental scams. We support the amendments that were added in the House, which make it easier for licensed real estate agents to easily verify their posts.

Online tools such as Craigslist or Facebook have become a common way for renters to find affordable rental housing. With the extreme shortage of affordable rental housing in Maryland, tenants are often committing to rental units from an online site without viewing the unit, paying their deposit and first month's rent sight unseen.

The use of online tools for rental listings can make it easier for landlords and tenants, but it also comes with the risks of fraud or abuse that exist with any online transaction. A scammer can take pictures off a legitimate listing or a vacant house and post the unit as their own property on these sites. They then take advantage of renters who are desperate to find an affordable unit and trap them in a fraudulent lease for a unit that does belong to the scammer. This hurts tenants, who lose any money they put down, and hurts landlords, whose units are being listed fraudulently on these sites.

Online rental scams are sadly not a rare occurrence. Nationwide, Federal Trade Commission data shows that since 2020 nearly 65,000 rental scams have been reported, with about \$65 million in losses.¹ From June 2024 - June 2025, about half the people reporting a rental scam said the listing was posted on Facebook, and another 16% said the listing was on Craigslist.

¹ Rental Scams hit home with \$65 million in reported losses, Consumer Protection Data Spotlight, FED. TRADE COMM'N (Dec. 22, 3035)

<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/data-visualizations/data-spotlight/2025/12/rental-scams-hit-home-65-million-reported-losses?>

Economic Action (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) champions economic rights and housing justice through advocacy, research, consumer education, and direct service. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.



Verification is easy and already used by other online entities. Tools such as Airbnb and Zillow have verification systems in place. Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace have no verification requirements, opening the door to these rental scams.

HB1456 would establish basic, common-sense guardrails to protect renters and landlords from online rental scams, and we urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Bevan-Dangel
Deputy Director

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