



Renters Alliance Testimony
In Favor—CB 21-0031—Landlord-Tenant-Lease Renewal
Matt Losak, Executive Director
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The Montgomery County Renters Alliance is the Maryland’s first and only independent nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to advancing renters rights and stability. Founded in 2010, we provide advocacy, education, and support for renters on a range of issues such as forming tenant associations, improving renter-landlord relations, resolving disputes and pursuing policies to secure fair and predictable rent increases and quality housing. We are also co-founders of Renters United Maryland (RUM), the first state-wide coalition formed to advance renter protection legislation in Annapolis.

Just-cause eviction laws require a landlord to automatically renew a lease with the same provisions each term with the exception of an annual rent increase, absent a legitimate stated reason not to. In addition to substantial breaches of a lease, property damage, illegal activities and disruptive behavior, just-cause laws also allow for nonrenewal, with proper notice, for legitimate business reasons including removing a unit from the market, or renting the unit to a family member, substantial renovation and demolition - provided these measures are done in good faith and not intended as a means to circumvent just-cause eviction protection.

The Renters Alliance has led the fight to enact just-cause protection in Maryland for nearly a decade. While we have not yet been successful in Annapolis, we have built wide-spread support for a Montgomery County only bill with unprecedented, unanimous support from the County Council and the Executive as well as the vast majority of the County Delegation and Montgomery’s major civic groups. Nevertheless, we have not as yet been able to overcome the obstructionist lobby of the landlord industry and their allies in the legislature who, even in the face of broad county support, have denied even the local courtesy of passing just-cause.

We therefore eagerly support Council Bill 21-0031, Landlord-Tenant-Lease Renewal. However, we must concur with our colleagues’ testimony at Renters United Baltimore that the bill should include specific, clear parameters for just-cause similar legislation passed in other regions.

We also urge Baltimore City to relate the unique and critically needed interpretation of state law this legislation provides to enact real protections against unjust evictions during the pandemic and long after throughout the state. If Baltimore City successfully enacts just-cause protection for its renting residents, it should lead the way for other jurisdictions to follow suit.



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Unstable communities have costs that go well beyond human suffering and inconvenience. They have a chilling effect on social and economic participation, harm student achievement, and increase health risks for residents in constant fear of dislocation, especially seniors, working families and those with fixed and low incomes. Instability also leads to the spread of COVID-19.

We therefore urge favorable passage of CB 21-0031 and we thank the Council sponsors for their leadership in bringing this legislation forward.