



BRANDON M. SCOTT

MAYOR

100 Holliday Street, Room 250

Baltimore, Maryland 21202

May 17, 2021

The Honorable Nick J. Mosby, Council President

Baltimore City Council

Attn: Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

Room 409, City Hall

100 Holliday Street

Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: City Council Bill 21-0022 – Security Deposit Alternatives

Dear Honorable President and Members of the City Council:

After careful consideration, I have chosen to veto City Council Bill 21-0022 pursuant to Article IV, Section 5 of the Baltimore City Charter.

City Council Bill 21-0022 seeks to establish alternative options for tenants who are unable to afford a traditional security deposit. I applaud the bill's sponsor for seeking to reduce the burden on residents as they seek to secure stable housing in the City of Baltimore. The ability for a tenant to spread the cost of a traditional security deposit over at least a three-month period is a commendable solution that acknowledges the real difficulties many of our residents have in being able to meet this up-front cost barrier.

However, I cannot ignore the concerns raised about the security deposit insurance option included within the legislation. Notably, that the provision can hurt the very people that it is intended to help.

When legislative bodies are seeking to implement novel solutions, the general public rightfully experiences hesitancy as to whether the legislation will have unintended negative consequences. There is a great deal of trust that must be placed in our elected leaders that they have thoughtfully and diligently pursued all options and have developed legislation that presents the best possible solutions.

The benefits that can come from an installment plan for security deposits and the well-intentioned support of the bill's sponsor and fellow councilmembers do not outweigh the harm that the security deposit insurance provision can do to our residents. This decision was not made lightly. It came after careful consideration of the legislation on my desk, review of numerous letters to my office from community members, and countless discussions with the councilmembers in efforts to find a workable path forward that would provide renters with more opportunities without inadvertently putting them in a riskier situation than where they started.

Nevertheless, we must continue to work to provide our residents with the necessary tools to obtain stable rental housing. I greatly respect the work of the council to improve the conditions for renters in the City. I would like to work with Council Vice President Sharon Green Middleton and our council to bring together the necessary stakeholders, including the NAACP and Public Justice Center, to review and analyze the obstacles to stable rental housing such as access to affordable security deposits and to propose comprehensive policy changes that would work in the best interest of renters across the City.

Together, we can generate impactful legislation that safeguards renters' rights and opportunities.

In Service,



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor
City of Baltimore