

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 20-0526  
(First Reader)**

---

Introduced by: President Scott, Councilmembers Henry, Cohen, Dorsey, Burnett, Pinkett,  
Bullock, Clarke, Middleton, Reisinger, Costello, Sneed, Stokes, Schleifer

Introduced and read first time: April 27, 2020

Assigned to: Land Use Committee

---

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Housing and Community  
Development, Department of Finance, Housing Authority of Baltimore City

---

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ORDINANCE concerning

2 **Baltimore City COVID-19 Renter Relief Act**

3 FOR the purpose of prohibiting the increase of rent during and after certain declared emergencies;  
4 prohibiting certain notices to tenants; requiring certain notices to tenants; prohibiting certain  
5 late fees; defining certain terms; providing for a date of termination of the prohibitions;  
6 providing for a special effective date; and generally relating to protecting Baltimore City  
7 tenants.

8 BY adding

9 Article 13 - Housing and Urban Renewal  
10 Section(s) 8-4  
11 Baltimore City Code  
12 (Edition 2000)

13 BY renumbering current

14 Article 13 - Housing and Urban Renewal  
15 Sections 8-4 and 8-5, respectively, to 8-5 and 8-6, respectively  
16 Baltimore City Code  
17 (Edition 2000)

18 **SECTION 1. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
19 Laws of Baltimore City read as follows:

20 **Baltimore City Code**

21 **Article 13. Housing and Urban Renewal**

22 **Subtitle 8. Rent Increases**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.  
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

**Council Bill 20-0526**

**§ 8-4. RENT INCREASES BARRED – DURING STATES OF EMERGENCY.**

(A) *“EMERGENCY” DEFINED.*

IN THIS SECTION, “EMERGENCY” MEANS THE CATASTROPHIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARED BY THE GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND ON MARCH 5, 2020, AS AMENDED OR EXTENDED BY THE GOVERNOR, UNDER STATE PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE, § 14-3A-02.

(B) *SCOPE.*

THIS SECTION ONLY APPLIES TO RENTAL FEE INCREASES ON EXISTING TENANTS. NOTHING IN THIS SECTION MAY BE CONSTRUED AS APPLYING TO LEASES FOR NEW TENANTS.

(C) *IN GENERAL.*

A LANDLORD MAY NOT INCREASE A TENANT’S RENTAL FEE IF:

- (1) THE INCREASE WOULD TAKE EFFECT DURING AN EMERGENCY; OR
- (2) NOTICE OF THE INCREASE IS NOT IN COMPLIANCE WITH SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION.

(D) *NOTICE OF RENT ADJUSTMENT.*

(1) *IN GENERAL.*

DURING AN EMERGENCY AND WITHIN 90 DAYS AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF AN EMERGENCY, A LANDLORD MAY NOT NOTIFY A TENANT OF A RENTAL FEE INCREASE.

(2) *PRE-EMERGENCY RENT INCREASE NOTICES.*

A LANDLORD MUST INFORM A TENANT IN WRITING TO DISREGARD ANY NOTICE OF A RENTAL FEE INCREASE IF:

- (i) THE LANDLORD PROVIDED THE NOTICE TO THE TENANT PRIOR TO AN EMERGENCY; AND
- (ii) THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE INCREASE WOULD OCCUR ON OR AFTER THE DATE THE EMERGENCY BEGAN.

(E) *LATE FEES PROHIBITED.*

A LANDLORD MAY NOT CHARGE OR OTHERWISE ASSESS A TENANT FOR NONPAYMENT OR LATE PAYMENT OF A RENTAL FEE DURING AN EMERGENCY OR WITHIN 90 DAYS AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF AN EMERGENCY.

(F) *CITY TO POST NOTICE.*

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MUST POST ON ITS WEBSITE INFORMATION REGARDING THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION, INCLUDING THE

**Council Bill 20-0526**

1 DATE THAT AN EMERGENCY EXPIRES AND THE DATE THAT IS 90 DAYS AFTER THE  
2 EXPIRATION OF THE EMERGENCY.

3 **§ 8-5. [§ 8-4.] Landlord’s right of review.**

4 The provisions of this subtitle do not limit a landlord’s right, under the applicable provisions  
5 of the City Building, Fire, and Related Codes Article, to an administrative review of a  
6 violation notice.

7 **§ 8-6. [§ 8-5.] Enforcement by tenant.**

8 A tenant may seek relief from an appropriate court to restrain or enjoin any violation of the  
9 provisions of this law.

10 **SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That the catchlines contained in this Ordinance  
11 are not law and may not be considered to have been enacted as a part of this or any prior  
12 Ordinance.

13 **SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That this Ordinance takes effect on the date it is  
14 enacted. It will remain effective through the 121<sup>st</sup> day following the expiration of the  
15 catastrophic health emergency declared by the Governor on March 5, 2020, as amended or  
16 extended by the Governor; and, immediately after that date, with no further action by the Mayor  
17 and City Council, this Ordinance will be abrogated and of no further effect.