



TESTIMONY
Maryland General Assembly
Environmental and Transportation Committee
In Favor of HB744

Chris Perry, 301-588-3987
Vice Chair, Renters Alliance Board of Directors
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Good afternoon, Committee Members. My name is Chris Perry and I am the Vice-Chair of the Montgomery County Renters Alliance—a coalition of more than 30 labor, community, religious, political and civic action organizations and thousands of renters. We are Maryland's first and only organized voice dedicated exclusively to renter outreach, education, organizing and advocacy.

The Renters Alliance **is in favor of HB744—Tenant Protection Act**. We support the bill's reasonable advancement of renters' rights to include receiving relocation expenses when, through no fault of their own, they are forced to leave their home because the landlord has neglected to maintain a safe and sanitary environment; or if a tenant is threatened by stalking sexual predators.

We also believe that 30 days, not the current 45 day waiting period, is sufficient time for a landlord to return a security deposit in total, or after deductions for reasonable and verifiable charges for damages caused by the tenant.

Regarding utility billing, the Renters Alliance is seeing increasing confusion, inaccuracy, and, in some cases, downright theft by unscrupulous landlords when calculating utility bills. No one should be forced to pay any bill without knowing it is accurate and verifiable with information as to how utility bills are calculated.

Perhaps of greatest impact is the right of tenants to organize. We strongly support a state-wide tenants' right to use apartment community spaces for renters to meet to share relevant information and to organize tenants associations for their collective welfare—a right we won in Montgomery that has proven its value on numerous occasions where renters choose to address apartment issues and strengthen their communities.

For these reasons, we urge your favorable report.

Thank you

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