



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB 523

March 30, 2021

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: HOUSE BILL 523 – Landlord and Tenant – Repossession for Failure to Pay Rent – Registration and License Information

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 523.

HB 523 would require a landlord to submit documents that prove they are in compliance with local license requirements and lead-based paint abatement laws, prior to filing a complaint in an action for repossession for failure to pay rent and using the resources of the District Court system and the Sheriff of Baltimore to evict a tenant.

In 2018, the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore enacted an ordinance¹ that required all rental properties to register with the City's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) beginning on January 1, 2019. The requirements are two-fold: (1) register with HCD via an online portal; and (2) be inspected by a Maryland-licensed, Baltimore City-registered home inspector. As of the beginning of February 2020, City HCD estimates that they have issued rental licenses for approximately 52%-55% of the current total estimated universe of current rental units in Baltimore City.

HB 523 would aid significantly in achieving two important operational goals: (1) preventing scofflaw landlords from abusing taxpayer funded government resources in the District Court and the Sheriff's office to evict tenants when they have not come into compliance with local laws expressly enacted to improve and monitor the health, safety and welfare of the tenants in the City

¹ See Baltimore City Ordinance 18-130 (2018).

of Baltimore; and (2) to shift the burden onto the landlord to affirmatively prove they are in compliance with these laws, rather than the existing burden shifting regime that alternates back and forth between landlord and tenant, which has the practical effect of imposing an additional burden on taxpayer resources when City HCD produces evidentiary information around these licenses at issue.

HB 523 provides a massive step forward in preventing landlords from abusing taxpayer funded government resources where they are flouting local laws designed to protect the very tenants they profit off of on a daily basis.

For these reasons, the BCA requests a **favorable** report on HB 523.