

February 12, 2021

Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB574 - Montgomery County Stable Homes Act

Position: **OPPOSE**

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of our 500-member businesses and more than 45,000 employees in Montgomery County, this letter is in opposition to **HB574 - Montgomery County Stable Homes Act**. This bill would require Montgomery County housing providers to house and renew a tenant's lease unless the provider can prove in court the existence of one of eight "just causes" for eviction or non-renewal. While the legislation is presented as a tenant's rights bill, good tenants will suffer if apartment owners cannot timely remove problem tenants. Bottom line, this bill prohibits a residential housing provider from evicting a resident in the absence of "just cause" which includes egregious activity by the tenant.

According to our numerous members in the apartment and residential property industry, as well as the Apartment and Office Building Association and the Maryland Multi-Housing Association, most tenants are good people who abide by the community rules and pay their rent on time. Housing providers have every reason to keep such tenants. However, each year about one percent of tenants are the subject of repeated neighbor complaints due to their conduct of threatening behavior, noise, illegal activity, or other lease violations. That one percent of tenants is currently issued a 60-day notice to vacate, and the problems are eliminated expeditiously.

In addition, HB574 would make it significantly more challenging to remove a nuisance tenant by requiring the landlord to prove in court one of seven listed reasons considered "just cause" for not renewing a lease. Good tenants expect their respective housing provider to provide them the "quiet enjoyment" of their premises – not to be dragged into court to testify against a problematic neighbor.

Finally, current laws already protect the tenant against "retaliatory evictions" – The State and Montgomery County already have robust laws that prohibit an eviction or retaliatory action against a tenant as a result of the tenant. This bill is a solution looking for a problem.

We respectfully request that you vote UNFAVORABLE on this bill. Thank you for your consideration of our remarks.

Sincerely,



Allie Williams
President & CEO