



BILL NO: House Bill 86
TITLE: Landlord and Tenant – Residential Leases – Tenant Rights and Protections
(Tenant Protection Act of 2022)
COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation
HEARING DATE: January 18, 2022
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 86.**

House Bill 86 confers many critical protections to tenants including those that are victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Notably HB 86 expands those qualified to provide the necessary documentation that a person is in fact a victim or survivor of domestic violence so that the victim may terminate their future liability under a residential lease. The law already permits the lease termination. Many victims of domestic violence seek assistance from service providers or medical professionals and do not utilize the protective order or peace order process. The definition of “Qualified Third Party” as amended in HB 86 is victim-centered and consistent with existing law, specifically determining eligibility for the Address Confidentiality Program, MD STATE GOVT § 7-304. A victim of domestic violence should not be compelled to go to court and obtain a protective order or peace order to prove that they are in fact a victim and access protections available to them in Maryland law.

House Bill 86 defines domestic violence to include the definition of abuse found in MD Code, Family Law, § 4-501. This is existing law. MNADV supports this definition as it reflects the current understanding and knowledge of domestic violence and includes acts such as assault, rape, and stalking.

Victims of domestic violence must often flee their homes to escape the potentially life-threatening violence they are facing. In doing so they risk homelessness with 38% of victims of domestic violence experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives.¹ This is further complicated and exacerbated by the economic instability victims of domestic violence face, often a direct result of their abuse. Legislation such as HB 86 is critical to support victims so they can leave their abusers without facing further economic harms.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 86.**

¹ Charlene K. Baker, Cook, Sarah L., Norris, Fran H., “Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response,” *Violence Against Women* 9, no. 7 (2003): 754-783.

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