



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0367

Landlord and Tenant - Repossession for Failure to Pay Rent - Rental Assistance Programs
Environment and Transportation Committee

February 2, 2022

CASA is pleased to provide strong support for HB367 Landlord and Tenant - Repossession for Failure to Pay Rent - Rental Assistance Programs. CASA is the largest membership-based immigrant services and advocacy organization in the mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 100,000 Black and Latino immigrants and working families.

In the last legislative session, the legislature did not take the critical step in requiring that landlords utilize emergency rental assistance before filing a Failure To Pay Rent eviction action. HB367 creates the pre-requisite step to ensure that applications are made to use federal funds, cover outstanding rent, and avoid any resort to litigation. This bill will ensure that emergency rental assistance distribution is more efficient - providing a new legal tool to help local programs distribute excess remaining rental assistance funds fairly and effectively.

CASA membership, which comprises nearly entirely of tenants, has struggled tremendously during the pandemic. Many are ineligible for different forms of relief - relying on rental assistance that has been severely delayed. It is a top priority for CASA members to receive rental assistance as quickly as possible to prevent a mass wave of evictions. The emergency nature of this bill can not be understated. Countless members of the immigrant community are waiting on rental assistance facing eviction ahead - and without the protections of a moratorium in place, face eviction court, even with rental assistance pending.

We urge the committee to consider the lives and livelihoods of every Maryland tenant facing eviction. This bill is a step toward bridging the gap for Maryland residents and the local emergency rental assistance programs that are desperately needed at this time.

As a member of the Renters United Maryland coalition, we urge a favorable report on HB367. For any questions, please contact cpaul@wearecasa.org.