



House Bill 367

Landlord and Tenant – Repossession for Failure to Pay Rent – Rental Assistance Programs

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

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From: D’Paul Nibber and Michael Sanderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 367. This bill would, among other provisions, prevent a landlord from filing a complaint in court to repossess a property for failure to pay rent without having exhausted all available opportunities to receive emergency rental assistance.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryland has experienced a record number of evictions. To stabilize the housing market, counties have been relied upon to distribute federal emergency rental assistance to qualified tenants experiencing financial distress. County agencies have worked diligently to ensure this assistance is provided in a timely manner. However, in the recent past, state and federal guidelines regarding payment distribution record-keeping, evidence of rental arrangements, and collection of qualifying income documentation contributed to delays in assistance payments.

County officials have cited the sometimes prolonged rental assistance payment process as a driving factor for landlords to recoup rent due by filing for eviction. In recent months, counties have increased the efficiency and timeliness of their emergency rental assistance programs, yet eviction filings concerning tenants eligible for assistance persist.

HB 367 is needed to ensure housing stability for these vulnerable tenants. Upon eviction, these former tenants are faced with cascading negative health and economic issues including homelessness, food insecurity, and job loss – placing a substantial burden on state and county resources.

HB 367 would protect vulnerable Marylanders from needless evictions and by doing so, prevent the avoidable depletion of state and local resources. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** HB 367 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.