

SB992 - Real Property - Landlord and Tenant - Procedures for Failure to Pay Rent, Breach of
Lease, and Tenant Holding Over
Hearing before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,
March 7, 2024
Position: FAVORABLE

Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for having me. My name is Indigo Null, I am a tenant advocate and organizer with Baltimore Renters United. I work with tenants every day to help them understand and exercise their rights, and run BRU's rent court watch program where I meet dozens of tenants going through the process of eviction proceedings every month.

I do not know a single tenant who's been evicted who has not lost possessions because of it. I know a tenant who was evicted several weeks after her father passed away - she lost all her dead father's belongings when she was evicted with no notice and only managed to recover her father's wedding ring because her landlord told her what shop he'd pawned it at. Another tenant lost her birth certificate, ID, and passport in her eviction and was thus unable to be hired at her new job because she had literally no forms of identification proving who she was.

I know multiple tenants who now sleep with their doors locked or chairs under their door handles because they were awoken by their landlords and sheriff's deputies bursting into their rooms unannounced - one tenant was in her underwear and now still sleeps fully clothed with shoes next to her bed a year later because of her experience.

I have seen children lose their school books and their clothes, their favorite stuffed animals.

Tenants are advised to call the Sheriff's office to ask if they are on the list to be evicted that week, but I know at least a dozen tenants who called every couple of days and were told they weren't, only to wake up to the sheriff at their door the next day.

Landlords are always given a heads up about eviction dates, and I have seen them use this advance notice to block parking lots, turn off elevators, and otherwise obstruct tenants' abilities to remove their belongings when an eviction happens. Why are we able to give landlords to have this advance notice, but not tenants? How do these landlords have more of a right to decide what happens with a tenant's belongings than the tenants themselves? **Do tenants lose a right to their personal property just because they have been unable to pay their rent?**

A tenant who doesn't know when they are getting put out can't arrange for movers, they can't pack their things, they can't find their essentials. Evictions are already traumatic enough without a tenant losing everything they own. Tenants need to know this information so they can plan and keep what's left of their lives together.

I urge a favorable report on the TPRA- tenants deserve some level of predictability in a time that is already so chaotic and traumatic for them.