

# FACT SHEET

## Affordable Housing – Tenant Protections

### **Problem:**

People with lower incomes tend to rent instead of owning homes. When it comes to housing, most tenants aren't familiar with their rights. More than 10,000 eviction judgements were entered in Virginia courts in the third quarter of 2022. People of faith recognize the need to stand with the poor, and want to see those who rent treated fairly.

### **Solution:**

Virginia's legislature must pass legislation offering protections for renters and strengthening existing tenants' rights.

**Pass HB 1652 (Del. Price):** Expands pay-or-quit period from 5 to 14 days.

**Pass HB 1830 (Del. Torian):** Expands pay-or-quit period from 5 to 14 days.

**Pass SB 1330 (Sen. McClellan, Sen. Locke):** Expands pay-or-quit period from 5 to 14 days.

These bills would put a protection in the path of evictions. The first step of eviction proceedings is a letter saying a tenant has five days to pay the back rent or leave the premises. Although it is true that this "pay-or-quit" letter is only the first step of an eviction and tenants have at least a month to pay back rent, many renters don't realize this. Renters will often vacate the property from fear of legal action. The pay-or-quit period should be permanently expanded to 14 days, which gives tenants an opportunity to learn their rights and get money together.

**Pass HB 1651 (Del. Price):** Makes the rental application process more transparent.

**Pass SB 1340 (Sen. Barker):** Makes the rental application process more transparent.

**Pass HB 1702 (Del. Maldonado):** Requires landlords to inform tenants of rent increases 90 days before their rental contract renews.

**Pass HB 1732 (Del. Bennett-Parker):** Offers tenants a payment plan before eviction if they owe less than one month's rent.

These bills would require landlords to be transparent about their policies, whether that be credit score requirements, or increases in rent. This ensures that tenants have sufficient information and time to prepare for a change in circumstances.

**Pass HB 1650 (Del. Price):** Allows localities to enforce rental agreements when landlords don't keep property up to code.

**Pass HB 1845 (Del. Taylor):** Requires landlords to refer elderly or disabled tenants to social services if they are evicted.

**Pass SB 1278 (Sen. Boysko):** Allows localities to create rent stabilization ordinances

Counties and cities throughout Virginia are most intimately familiar with their community's housing needs and the unique challenges in their area. These bills allow for localities to protect their residents in a more concrete way.

**Pass HB 1635 (Del. Bulova):** Allows tenants to terminate a lease if the dwelling place is uninhabitable due to landlord negligence.

**Pass HB 1735 (Del. VanValkenburg):** Clarifies policy around the statement of tenant rights and responsibilities.

These bills support tenants by informing them of their rights and allowing them to avoid paying rent for an uninhabitable home.

Sources include Virginia Poverty Law Center and Virginia Housing Alliance