

# 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, and Virginia law is stacked in favor of landlords. More than 10,000 eviction judgements were entered in Virginia courts in the third quarter of 2022. Before the pandemic, in 2018, about 45 percent of evictions were for less than one month's rent. Though there is discretion allowed, many large landlords follow the letter of the law, resulting in fast evictions or lack of transparency in application processes. People lose their homes and struggle to find a new place because of evictions as well as unclear communication. The faith community recognizes the need to stand with the poor and wants to see people who rent treated fairly.

### Solution:

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

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

This bill 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, this first step puts an eviction on someone's record, affecting them for years to come. 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.

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

This bill would require landlords to be transparent about their policies, whether that be credit score requirements or number of units available. This ensures that tenants are not spending hundreds of dollars on non-refundable application fees while looking for a new home.

**Support HB 1702** (Del. Maldonado): *Requires landlords to inform tenants of rent increases 60 days before their rental contract renews.*

This bill would ensure that tenants have sufficient notice when a landlord is going to increase the rent at the end of a lease, whether to make financial plans or look for a new place to live. This supports both the people living in the home, and the landlords, so there are no surprises.

**Support HB 1635** (Del. Bulova): *Allows tenants to terminate a new lease and get their security deposit back if the home is uninhabitable.*

This bill would ensure that when someone rents a new home sight-unseen, they are protected from bad actors who were misrepresenting the state of the dwelling. It ensures that tenants moving long distances have recourse if the home does not comply with fire code and other important regulations.

*Sources include Virginia Poverty Law Center and Virginia Housing Alliance.*