

FACT SHEET

Tenant Protections

Problem: People with lower incomes tend to rent instead of owning homes, and more than one-third of renters in Virginia are cost-burdened by their housing. Many tenants aren't familiar with all their rights, and legal jargon can be confusing. In addition, much of Virginia law is slanted disproportionately in favor of protecting landlords, creating a power imbalance for tenants. Religious traditions recognize the need to stand with the poor. People of faith want to reduce evictions and see those who rent treated fairly.

Solution: Virginia must pass legislation to protect renters and strengthen existing tenants' rights. Here are a few policies that would help:

Housing Stability:

14-Day Pay-Or-Quit (HB 15 Del. Price, SB 48 Sen. Rouse) Extending the pay-or-quit period from 5 days to 14 days would give tenants more time to catch up on rent payment before having to appear in court.

Appeal Bond Waiver (HB 221 Del. Hope) This bill would remove the "pay-to-play" requirement that indigent tenants pay a large bond to appeal and get a fair trial.

Eviction Diversion Program (HB 873 Del. McClure) This bill would remove barriers to make the program more accessible and effective at keeping Virginians housed.

Housing Affordability

Regulate Junk Fees (HB 379 Del. Bennet-Parker, Del. Charlie Schmidt, SB 349 VanValkenburg) This bill would regulate excessive fees during application, lease signing and renewal.

Require Payment Plans (HB 95 Del. Bennett-Parker) This bill would allow tenants to have a payment plan rather than face eviction if they owe a small amount of rent.

Right of First Refusal (for manufactured housing communities: HB 375 Del. Krizek) (for multifamily affordable housing: HB 4 Del. Bennett-Parker) These bills would keep housing communities affordable to the public and preserve affordable housing by giving localities a chance to buy properties containing manufactured housing, or multifamily units with expiring subsidies.

Healthy Housing:

Warranty of Habitability (HB 281 Del. Callsen, SB 373 Sen. Boysko) This bill would give renters living in unsuitable/unhealthy conditions a defense against being evicted for not paying rent.

Tenant Assertion (HB 848 Del. Cousins) Tenants would be able to sue landlords for having bad living conditions in their units.

Housing Rights:

Anti Retaliation: (HB 329 Del. McClure) This bill would protect tenant's right to organize for better living conditions without retaliation from landlords.

Homelessness Bill of Rights (HB 1394 Del. J. G. Cole) Prohibits the criminalization of homelessness, and gives legal protection for people face charges.

Effective Expungement (HB 1078 Del. Hernandez) Prohibits housing discrimination based on history of dismissed or non-suited evictions.

Protect Manufactured Homeowners (HB 374 Del. Krizek) provide basic rights for MHC residents, such as the right to renew year-long leases w/ fee disclosures.



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