



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony  
County Council Bill 7 - 24: Landlord-Tenant Relations – Tenant Protection and Notification

April 23, 2024

**SUPPORT**

The Montgomery County Community Action Board (CAB), the County’s local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, is in support of County Council Bill 7 – 24, which would enhance and expand protections for renters in our County.

The Community Action Agency, for which our board is the governing body, has been heavily involved in emergency response efforts following far too many apartment fires and emergencies in our County. The agency’s Navigation Unit and the Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center have seen firsthand the devastating impact that fires and explosions have on lower-income residents. As part of the County’s Emergency Management Mass Care Operations team, Community Action staff and contractors work to address the immediate and ongoing needs of residents affected by these emergency situations. Our board receives regular updates on their incredible efforts to address numerous apartment fires over the years, including their recent work addressing the needs of residents displaced by the 2023 fire at the Arrive Silver Spring apartment building.

The CAB supports the additional requirements for lease agreements, the public notices, the disclosure of contact information for building representatives, and the emergency plan requirements outlined in this bill. We want to highlight the requirement that landlords share information about renters insurance. When our board met with agency staff and colleagues who address renters’ issues, renters insurance came up as a critical need. That said, when emergencies occur, residents who have renters insurance have better outcomes than those without. We encourage the Council to explore additional programs to help renters purchase insurance and to provide financial assistance so that renters who cannot afford insurance can still access this protection.

Our board also notes that any discussion of renters’ rights and safety must include an acknowledgement of the lack of affordable housing in the County and the very high cost of housing. Lower-income residents often cannot afford to live in newer buildings that are equipped with the latest safety measures. According to the Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard, a household with two working adults, one preschooler, and one school-age child needs to earn \$122,943 to cover their basic necessities, over four times the federal poverty level. This same family is estimated to need \$1,934 each month just to pay for housing. The extremely high cost of living often leaves lower-income residents with far fewer options for housing and other

necessities. Basic safety measures should not be a luxury for those who can afford them; they should be available to all residents regardless of income. We therefore encourage the Council to explore other policies that will enhance safety and support lower-income residents, such as expanded rental assistance, funding to help residents purchase renters insurance, and eviction protections.

The CAB supports Council Bill 7 – 24 and recommends exploring more opportunities to support lower-income renters in our community.