

April 23, 2024

**Letter to the Montgomery County Council**

**Re: Bill 7-24, Landlord-Tenant Relations – Tenant Protection and Notification**

Dear Council Members:

While the conversation around rental housing in the county tends to focus on supply and affordability, it is important to also discuss the safety and transparency of existing units. The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD, **supports Bill 7-24, Landlord-Tenant Relations - Tenant Protection and Notification** based on our position that landlord-tenant relations laws should be grounded in clear communication of rights and security of housing.

Bill 7-24 aligns with **our support for a model lease that clearly states the rights and responsibilities of both parties and includes a warranty of habitability**. Requiring these leases to inform tenants of an emergency safety plan and any building or unit's sprinkler system is an important provision in the proposed law. The provision for **clarifying building insurance to a tenant is also crucial**, as many tenants are not aware that the landlords' policies typically do not cover a renter's personal possessions.

Additionally, we **support the requirement that landlords must have a building representative available 24/7 for tenants to contact in case of emergencies, and that proper notice must be given to tenants before maintenance to major building systems**. This better ensures tenants can make arrangements when power or water will not be available. We **recommend adding "elevators" to the list of building systems warranting advanced notice to tenants for repairs**, since they may not always be related to power outages. The lack of these utilities can lead to serious harm or difficulty if not safeguarded. Which brings us to our final reason for supporting this bill.

The **requirement that rental housing unit temperatures be no higher than 80 degrees in summer is important for the health of all tenants**. Extreme heat, which is lasting longer on average each year due to climate change, poses serious risks to all residents, especially the youngest and oldest of our population. Low-income residents, people with disabilities or mobility issues, pregnant people, infants, and people on certain medications are the most susceptible to heat-related illnesses. These residents need better protection against dangerous living conditions which, unfortunately, are common among older and lower cost housing.

While the League believes Bill 7-24 will improve landlord-tenant relations for all county renters, we want to point out the improvement it will have for Black, Indigenous, and people



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of color communities in particular. Housing quality is essential for achieving racial equity and social justice for marginalized communities. It is necessary for the economic and physical health of the county. Safe housing helps families and communities build their lives. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our views, and we urge the Council to pass this legislation.

Susan Albertine  
President, League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD