



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**Montgomery County Delegation Public Hearing
Economic Development Committee
December 3, 2018**

**Support for MC 22-19 – Montgomery County – Residential Leases – Just Cause
Eviction**

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Good evening Mr. Chair and members of the Delegation. I am Kate Stewart, Mayor of Takoma Park, testifying in favor of this bill on behalf of the City of Takoma Park.

As was noted in the City of Takoma Park's testimony before the Montgomery County Delegation at the November 14 Joint Priorities Hearing, the Takoma Park City Council supports MC 22-19. Delegate Wilkins' bill would help to correct the existing eviction process, which is unbalanced and unfair, by prohibiting a landlord from evicting a tenant from leased property in Montgomery County, including the City of Takoma Park, without just cause. This bill would also strengthen the notice requirements when just cause exists.

The bill articulates the many reasonable circumstances that would qualify as just cause, with which the City agrees. At the same time, it provides protections for renters against potential unfair treatment, discrimination, or surprises that could have far-reaching adverse impacts not only on individuals and families, but entire communities.

Matthew Desmond in his book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* wrote:

“It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart... Eviction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty.”

Evictions lead to:

- Job loss and economic instability
- Increased student mobility
- Loss and damage to personal property
- Homelessness
- Mental and physical health issues

Right now, it is too easy for families to be forced out of their homes with little or no ability to defend themselves. Tenants can be taken to court and evicted with virtually no reason provided. They are often without legal representation and have little chance of success against skilled attorneys.

This bill clearly outlines the process and justifiable reasons for evictions, and still permits landlords to continue to be able to evict a tenant who breaches their lease, engages in criminal activity, endangers other tenants, or does not pay their rent. As public servants, we all want to ensure that if anyone is being removed from their home, it is for good reason. We have an opportunity to make that happen.

The City of Takoma Park has a wide range of rental housing types, from large apartment complexes to small, multi-family buildings with only a few units. We currently do not have just cause protections, but would like to join jurisdictions across the nation that do.

For these reasons, Takoma Park supports and urges a favorable vote on MC 22-19 and thanks Delegate Wilkins for her work on this issue.