Talking Points: Oppose A Charles County Rental Registry

What's Being Proposed:

- The Charles County Commissioners have set $1.8 million aside to create a new Charles County Rental Registry program. (Bill No. 2026-08)
- This new program would cost landlords **over $100 per year**, requires properties be **managed by someone within 50 miles** of the address, and would require **biennial inspections by county staff** for compliance.
- This legislation would apply to standard rentals, short-term rentals, hotels and more. **Whether you rent a single-family house or just a bedroom inside, you'd be impacted by this new legislation.**

Why Oppose This Bill:

This Is A Tax On Renters & Constituents

- The costs associated with this new licensing and inspection/reinspection we anticipate being simply passed onto renters. Renters can expect rents to rise based on these fees.
- If items in a unit are found to be out of compliance with inspections, regardless of if a unit is already being lived in, landlords would be expected to pay to make repairs or enhancements. These costs will also be pushed onto tenants through rent increases.
- The $1.8 million price tag to stand-up this program is significant, and that is being footed by taxpaying constituents.

It Creates Redundancy

- This bill is riddled with processes that are repeated at multiple levels of government.
- The Tenant Safety Act of 2024 recently established that every rental property offered for lease is deemed to be fit for human habitation.
    - In the law, "fit for human habitation" means that a rental unit is free from serious conditions or defects that are, or could become, a fire risk or a danger to the health, safety, or lives of the people living there if not quickly fixed.

- The law is clear that rental units must remain fit for human habitation from the beginning to the end of the lease.
- If a landlord fails to repair serious or dangerous conditions, a tenant can ask the local District Court to set up an escrow account into which they pay their rent. The tenant will pay rent money directly to the court and the court will hold it until a judge hears your case and issues a decision.

This Bill Discourages Housing Production & Economic Growth

- The policy in this bill discourages homeowners from putting their homes on the market for rent. In a market already facing strained inventory, discouraging people from putting rentals on the market will net long term negative impacts.
- In the Maryland Comptroller's 2025 Report on Housing and the Economy, it was noted that housing regulations in Maryland are a major obstacle toward affordability. This bill creates additional regulation on the market.

This Bill Forces People To Hire Local Representatives

- An 2026 study found that almost 40% of landlords only own one unit. In many of these cases, as the management load of one unit is typically not great, a small landlord may opt to save money by managing the property themselves. If that person moves more than 50 miles away, that person couldn't be the property's local representative.
- Many military homeowners come and go in our region. Servicemembers are some of the most common single-unit owners and often manage themselves after moving.
- In many cases, the costs of hiring someone to act as a local representative can once again be passed on to tenants through rent increases.

What We're Asking For

Don't Harm Small Landlords And Renters

- We ask that the rental registry only apply to landlords who own 10 or more units/properties in Charles County.

Fix The Local Representative Requirement

- Remove the 50-mile requirement and allow for occupants of the rental housing unit to serve as a local representative.

Allow For A Transferrable License

- If a rental property is sold or transferred during the term of someone's lease, a new owner should not be required to go through the same process for the same property that would already be complying if a rental license was previously approved. We ask that licenses be made transferrable and remain effective for their full terms once approved.

Allow For Good Landlords To Benefit With Less Inspections

- This bill should include provisions that allow for landlords who don't have complaints against them to face a less rigorous inspection schedule. While a complaint-based system would be optimal for landlords and county staff, rewarding good landlords by allowing them to renew without a mandatory inspection would save everyone involved time and money.

Consider Creative Alternatives To The Rental Registry

- Whereas state legislators recently created the Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs (OLTA), perhaps a more affordable option to a rental registry would be a smaller, OTLA-inspired local initiative that would directly assist in providing local tenants and landlords resources to resolve disputes through the extensive and already existing channels. This would be a more effective route than this entire program. A smaller office to address the minimal complaints that are received annually would protect tenants from additional costs that this program would create.
- We would also recommend that the "See, Click, Report" app direct tenant complaints to the Free Legal Clinic at the District Court, for guidance in exercising their protections under the Tenants Safety Act of 2024. Fee waivers can also be sought in this process, and we would ask those resources also be provided.

Link to submit comments:
https://www.charlescountymd.gov/Home/Components/FormBuilder/FormBuilder/75fe1782e0ff4e44a602929342d12734/1447?folder=1369

HEARING INFO:

October 20, 2026

6:00 P.M.

Charles County Government Building

200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD 20646