



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
Bill 6-19 Landlord-Tenant Relations - Termination of Lease - Tenant Health and Safety
Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Lisette Engel
Community Action Board Member

Good afternoon. My name is Lisette Engel and I am a member of the Community Action Board's Executive Committee. I serve on the Board as a low-income representative.

The Community Action Board advocates for policies and programs that address the needs of lower-income County residents and help residents move towards self-sufficiency. I am here today to express the Board's strong support for Bill 6-19. In Montgomery County, where the cost of living is so high and affordable housing is scarce, lower-income residents often struggle to find acceptable housing options for their families. With limited options, many families may find themselves in living situations that are less than ideal.

Our Board is often notified of issues impacting the lower-income community through public forums, by residents attending our Board meetings, and through the participants in our Community Advocacy Institute. A few months ago, our Board was contacted by a local PTA advocate who was concerned that children at Burnt Mills Elementary School were missing class due to illnesses caused by mold at a local apartment complex. Parents were trying their best to request remediation of the problem by building management, but the dangerous situation persisted. Many parents felt stuck. They could break their leases and risk the financial penalties, or stay in the unhealthy environment and have their children continue to get sick. Situations like this one are not unique. While households with additional resources can easily leave dangerous housing situations or seek legal assistance, lower-income families are often left with few options.

The Community Action Board supports Bill 6-19 because it would address the type of situation described above and provide more options to residents. When landlords and building managers do not address problems impacting the health and safety of tenants within 30 days, tenants would be able to break their leases without the risk of penalties. Our Board believes that increased protections for tenants are a key component of equity in the County. We ask that you pass Bill 6-19, helping to ensure that all residents can obtain safe housing.