

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 20-0526
(First Reader)**

Introduced by: President Scott, Councilmembers Henry, Cohen, Dorsey, Burnett, Pinkett,
Bullock, Clarke, Middleton, Reisinger, Costello, Sneed, Stokes, Schleifer

Introduced and read first time: April 27, 2020

Assigned to: Land Use Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Housing and Community
Development, Department of Finance, Housing Authority of Baltimore City

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ORDINANCE concerning

2 **Baltimore City COVID-19 Renter Relief Act**

3 FOR the purpose of prohibiting the increase of rent during and after certain declared emergencies;
4 prohibiting certain notices to tenants; requiring certain notices to tenants; prohibiting certain
5 late fees; defining certain terms; providing for a date of termination of the prohibitions;
6 providing for a special effective date; and generally relating to protecting Baltimore City
7 tenants.

8 BY adding

9 Article 13 - Housing and Urban Renewal
10 Section(s) 8-4
11 Baltimore City Code
12 (Edition 2000)

13 BY renumbering current

14 Article 13 - Housing and Urban Renewal
15 Sections 8-4 and 8-5, respectively, to 8-5 and 8-6, respectively
16 Baltimore City Code
17 (Edition 2000)

18 **SECTION 1. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
19 Laws of Baltimore City read as follows:

20 **Baltimore City Code**

21 **Article 13. Housing and Urban Renewal**

22 **Subtitle 8. Rent Increases**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

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§ 8-4. RENT INCREASES BARRED – DURING STATES OF EMERGENCY.

(A) *“EMERGENCY” DEFINED.*

IN THIS SECTION, “EMERGENCY” MEANS THE CATASTROPHIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARED BY THE GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND ON MARCH 5, 2020, AS AMENDED OR EXTENDED BY THE GOVERNOR, UNDER STATE PUBLIC SAFETY ARTICLE, § 14-3A-02.

(B) *SCOPE.*

THIS SECTION ONLY APPLIES TO RENTAL FEE INCREASES ON EXISTING TENANTS. NOTHING IN THIS SECTION MAY BE CONSTRUED AS APPLYING TO LEASES FOR NEW TENANTS.

(C) *IN GENERAL.*

A LANDLORD MAY NOT INCREASE A TENANT’S RENTAL FEE IF:

- (1) THE INCREASE WOULD TAKE EFFECT DURING AN EMERGENCY; OR
- (2) NOTICE OF THE INCREASE IS NOT IN COMPLIANCE WITH SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION.

(D) *NOTICE OF RENT ADJUSTMENT.*

(1) *IN GENERAL.*

DURING AN EMERGENCY AND WITHIN 90 DAYS AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF AN EMERGENCY, A LANDLORD MAY NOT NOTIFY A TENANT OF A RENTAL FEE INCREASE.

(2) *PRE-EMERGENCY RENT INCREASE NOTICES.*

A LANDLORD MUST INFORM A TENANT IN WRITING TO DISREGARD ANY NOTICE OF A RENTAL FEE INCREASE IF:

- (i) THE LANDLORD PROVIDED THE NOTICE TO THE TENANT PRIOR TO AN EMERGENCY; AND
- (ii) THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE INCREASE WOULD OCCUR ON OR AFTER THE DATE THE EMERGENCY BEGAN.

(E) *LATE FEES PROHIBITED.*

A LANDLORD MAY NOT CHARGE OR OTHERWISE ASSESS A TENANT FOR NONPAYMENT OR LATE PAYMENT OF A RENTAL FEE DURING AN EMERGENCY OR WITHIN 90 DAYS AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF AN EMERGENCY.

(F) *CITY TO POST NOTICE.*

THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MUST POST ON ITS WEBSITE INFORMATION REGARDING THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION, INCLUDING THE

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1 DATE THAT AN EMERGENCY EXPIRES AND THE DATE THAT IS 90 DAYS AFTER THE
2 EXPIRATION OF THE EMERGENCY.

3 **§ 8-5. [§ 8-4.] Landlord’s right of review.**

4 The provisions of this subtitle do not limit a landlord’s right, under the applicable provisions
5 of the City Building, Fire, and Related Codes Article, to an administrative review of a
6 violation notice.

7 **§ 8-6. [§ 8-5.] Enforcement by tenant.**

8 A tenant may seek relief from an appropriate court to restrain or enjoin any violation of the
9 provisions of this law.

10 **SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That the catchlines contained in this Ordinance
11 are not law and may not be considered to have been enacted as a part of this or any prior
12 Ordinance.

13 **SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That this Ordinance takes effect on the date it is
14 enacted. It will remain effective through the 121st day following the expiration of the
15 catastrophic health emergency declared by the Governor on March 5, 2020, as amended or
16 extended by the Governor; and, immediately after that date, with no further action by the Mayor
17 and City Council, this Ordinance will be abrogated and of no further effect.