Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 553

State Representative Ismail Mohamed

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Brownlee, and members of the House Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 553.

House Bill 553 ensures that before a tenant faces eviction for nonpayment of rent, they are given written notice and a fair chance to make things right.

Across Ohio, we are seeing a worsening housing crisis that continues to push families to the edge. In Franklin County, more than 25,000 eviction cases were filed in 2024, according to the Franklin County Municipal Court Clerk's Office, a sharp increase from the pre-pandemic average of around 18,000. In Cuyahoga County, nearly 90,000 renter households, more than half of all renters, spend over 50 percent of their income on housing, as reported by the Cleveland Housing Equity Plan (2023). These numbers make one thing clear that too many Ohioans are just one unexpected expense away from losing their homes.

Most tenants know when their rent is due, that is not the problem. The issue arises when life happens such as a lost job, an unexpected medical bill, or a family emergency. Under current law, a single missed payment can quickly spiral into eviction, even when both tenants and landlords would prefer to work things out.

House Bill 553 introduces a more balanced and practical approach. It requires landlords to provide written notice and a reasonable opportunity to resolve missed rent before filing for eviction. It also gives both parties the option to enter into a short payment plan, opening the door for communication and solutions before cases reach the courthouse.

This bill is not about giving anyone a free pass, it is about fairness and stability. Most landlords want dependable tenants, not turnover costs, court filings, or vacant properties. Evictions take time and money, and once a tenant is gone, it can take weeks or months to recover.

By reducing unnecessary evictions, House Bill 553 saves landlords' money, keeps families in their homes, and strengthens our communities. This legislation strikes the right balance by protecting property owners' rights while giving tenants a fair chance to get back on track.

State Representative Terrence Upchurch

We are witnessing a housing crisis unfold across the state that has resulted in families losing their homes and rising eviction rates. Our state is consistently failing to keep pace with the demand for affordable housing, and the cost of living continues to increase every year. We are putting forth this legislation to help address this issue by allowing tenants and families a second chance by ensuring that they can opt into a payment plan, before landlords can file for eviction.

We have heard from constituents across Ohio who are struggling to make their rent payments on time, and they are often subject to minimal notice before they are forced into eviction proceedings. Funds for emergency housing payments and rental assistance are being quickly depleted due to the increased demand for these funds. It is our intention to provide a framework that will help families put themselves back on track with their rent payments, keep tenants in their homes, and ensure that landlords can recoup any payments that may have been missed. This has the added benefit of decreasing the demand for emergency rental assistance.

This is an economically sound approach, that allows tenants enough time to adjust their budgeting, stay on track, and remain in their homes. I humbly urge this committee to support this legislation and protect the rights of tenants.