

## Know Your Rights!

### BEFORE A LEASE IS SIGNED

In Howard County, landlords **MUST** first obtain a license from the Howard County Department of Licensing, Inspections and Permits (DILP) before leasing their property. **Confirm that YOUR landlord is licensed by calling 410-313-1830.**

### LEASE TERMS

A lease should be in writing and include:

- The length of the agreement (one year or month-to-month);
- The amount of rent and the date it needs to be paid each month;
- Who (landlord or tenant) is responsible for paying repairs and utilities: gas, heat, water, etc; If not specifically stated, it is assumed that repairs will be made by the landlord;
- The amount of notice that must be given by the tenant or landlord to terminate the lease, but no less than 30 days;
- The amount of any fee, not to exceed 5%, that will be charged for late payment of rent;
- Information about any security deposit the tenant is required to pay.

### SECURITY DEPOSITS

Security deposits may be collected by landlords to help offset the cost of any damage, above ordinary wear and tear, caused by the tenant.

- Security deposits (including pet deposits) cannot exceed two month's rent;
- Tenants must be given, upon request, the opportunity to inspect the property with the landlord at the beginning and end of the lease term;
- If any part of a deposit is withheld, the tenant must be given an itemized list of the damages and the actual cost for repairs;
- The landlord must return the tenant's security deposit plus interest, minus damages, within 45 days after the tenant moves out.

### AT THE END OF THE TENANCY

#### Early Termination

- If a tenant wants to move out before the end of the lease term, s/he is still responsible for the rent for the remainder of the term; however, the landlord is required to "mitigate" damages – that is, try to reduce the amount the tenant owes by renting the property to another tenant.

#### Eviction

- Landlords can evict tenants for non-payment of rent, failure to move at the end of the lease term, or for breaching any of the lease terms.
- Eviction is a legal process. Landlords must go to District Court to obtain an Order of Eviction against the tenant before requiring the tenant to vacate the premises; removing the tenant's belongings; or changing the locks on the premises.



Howard County Office of Consumer Protection

[www.howardcountymd.gov/consumer](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/consumer)

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If you need this information in an alternative format, contact us at 410-313-6420 (VOICE/RELAY) or [consumer@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:consumer@howardcountymd.gov)