



We're building for the future, and we need your help...

Working for a More Responsive Government

The Renters Alliance is working to improve government responsiveness so that complaints are handled swiftly, setting standards for investigations that consider both sides of a dispute and working to keep tenants in their homes. Right now, the complaint process can take months, forcing renters to wait anxiously for overdue repairs, for protection from management staff abuse, or for resolution of eviction proceedings. Even if the county's tenant office agrees with the tenant, the landlord can appeal through the Commission on Landlord/Tenant and then onward to housing court, processes that can go on for months or longer. Renters often face a stacked deck when landlords gang up with lawyers and property managers against a renter who usually has no one in his corner but himself. The Renters Alliance balances the table, stands with the renter and advocates for them. In some cases, we seek and coordinate pro-bono or low cost legal representation for the tenant.

Organizing Tenants

The Renters Alliance responds to people who want to organize local tenants associations, guiding and strengthening new groups so that they may develop their own relationships with landlords and property managers, thereby avoiding and productively resolving disputes. Our goal is to grow organizations whose sense of community and resident empowerment is strong.

Coordinating Legal Services and Providing Advocacy and Counseling

When a renter and a landlord are in dispute, the threat of legal fees can make protection of a renter's home a daunting task. Since our founding in 2010, the Renters Alliance has been developing strong relations with the legal community to provide pro-bono and low-cost legal representation for renters. We have proposed a "Tenant Legal Council" to provide these services and to train "Tenant Advocates" to assess and manage disputes. The Advocates would be trained with knowledge of the law sufficient to minimize legal engagement, but able to identify those issues that would require legal representation. This program needs your support.

Collaborating with County Agencies and Nonprofit to Keep Renters in their Homes

The Renters Alliance is limited to renter outreach, education and organizing; however, our work brings us into contact with renters who are in crisis and need help beyond our resources. Many of these renters are seniors, the disabled and the mentally ill. We are working with the county Department of Health and Human Services, as well as other nonprofits, to develop a referral program so that we can get critical services to renters who need them.

Raising Awareness that Renters Are Our Neighbors

Before the establishment of the Renters Alliance, the issues affecting rental communities were barely visible to the general public, much less elected officials and policy makers. The publication of the Tenant Work Group report in 2010 established our outreach efforts as the only nonprofit organization in the region exclusively dedicated to renter outreach, education. In addition, we have brought the issues of renter security, renters' rights and affordable rental housing into the public eye. We have initiated or been included in scores of print and electronic media stories, held dozens of public events and testified at the state and county levels on legislation to protect renters. We provide regular information to the press, policy makers and the public on issues important to renters through our newsletters, press releases, correspondence and speaking engagements. For the first time in county history, in his 2013 "State of the County" address, County Executive Isiah Leggett made a point of including Renters Alliance representatives at the event where he said, "Renters are more than 30% of the county. Renters deserve a voice, and they will always have a voice in my administration."

Expanding our Capacity to Meet the Needs of a Growing Renter Demographic.

According to Census data, more than 36% of Montgomery County renters live in rental housing and that figure is much higher in downtown Silver Spring, Bethesda and Rockville (up from 25% in 2008). And rental housing construction continues at a hurried pace. As the renter population increases, the Renters Alliance needs to expand from volunteers, part time and contract staff to full time leadership, and professional staff trained to organize, counsel and advocate for renters, building by building, county-wide. We need to upgrade our website so that we can stay abreast of housing issues and provide timely resources for renters, policy makers and landlords to use. And we need sufficient financial resources to grow programming and awareness so that renters know of us and know where to turn when their housing is at risk. And it is time for our organization to have offices, centrally located in Silver Spring—where the largest renter population lives—available to all.

With your support, our work continues. Please see our sponsorship opportunities attached.
