

EVICTIONS IN VIRGINIA – WHAT YOU WON'T SEE IN THE NEWS

1. The data

- There are serious flaws with the Princeton University study and evictions are not the problem in Virginia that they have been portrayed to be
- Most glaringly, the study recorded unlawful detainer filings (the beginning of the process) rather than actual evictions
- The data penalizes Virginia for having 38 of the 41 independent cities nationwide. If Richmond, VA numbers were combined with the surrounding counties, as they are with all the rest of the Princeton data, Richmond's eviction rate would much lower
- The actual data shows that about 85% of the time, the housing provider and tenant are working out an arrangement to avoid eviction after the unlawful detainer has been filed; that is to say, the court process is bringing the parties together to reach a mutually agreeable solution that keeps the tenant in place

2. Industry is not to blame

- We recognize when people are struggling and generally a housing provider will work with a tenant to avoid eviction
- Eviction is always a last option for a housing provider as it results in significant revenue loss over the duration of the 60-90 day process, court costs and costs associated with turning over a unit
- Housing Authorities are the number 1 UD filers and often are the worst maintained housing tracts.
- Increased regulation over an entire industry will not solve the issues. It's like punishing an entire class for one student's bad behavior. The bad behavior won't stop until it is addressed on a case by case basis. Increased code enforcement activity is paramount
- We recognize that any reasonable initiatives to reduce evictions help both the tenant and housing provider; as such we have actively and productively participated in the Housing Commission process convened by Senator Mamie Locke

3. Trust the process

- The Housing Commission appears set to advance a significant package of legislative concepts that enjoy the consensus support of stakeholder groups on all sides of the issue (see attached)
- Other stakeholder groups appear to be moving forward with legislative proposals outside of the agreed upon review process, which have not undergone the same level of in-depth analysis and consensus building



Welcome to the VAMA Chapter Network



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4. **Evictions are only a symptom**

- While we have identified a number of procedural reforms that will help to avoid evictions, the root of the problem remains the inability of lower-income Virginians to afford housing as wages have failed to grow commensurate with housing costs
- We will not truly address this issue until the state gets serious about investing in and removing barriers to the development of more affordable and workforce housing options. Getting financing and approval for apartments in general is extremely difficult. Getting financing and approval for Tax Credit or other low income housing is nearly impossible.



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