

D.C. Housing Providers Demand Passage of Court Reform Bill

SMOA says White's committee weakened RENTAL Act reforms and is holding up HIPA as court delays destabilize affordable housing.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, October 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Small Multifamily Owners Association](#) (SMOA) today demanded that the D.C. Council's Committee on Housing mark up the Housing Investment Protection Act (HIPA) by November 30 and that the full Council pass the bill. SMOA said the Council's failure to address the rent payment crisis is destabilizing affordable housing.

"Councilmember White's committee weakened essential court reforms in the RENTAL Act, and now he's holding up HIPA," said Dean Hunter, Founder and CEO of SMOA. "The Council's failure is harming landlords, tenants, and the entire affordable housing ecosystem."

Opening the September 24 HIPA hearing, Housing Committee Chair Robert White said, "We covered almost every single request from the industry over the past three years."

SMOA disputes that account.

Essential reforms were removed or weakened

Nearly five years after the pandemic began, the Mayor proposed court reforms in the RENTAL Act. The Housing Committee removed or weakened key provisions:

Initial hearing deadline. The Committee omitted the Mayor's proposed 45-day hearing deadline, and it never became law.



Councilmember Robert White

“

We don't want faster evictions. We want tenants to pay rent, and we want a functioning Landlord and Tenant Court”

Dean Hunter, CEO, Small Multifamily Owners Association

Protective orders. The Committee narrowed the requirements for rent payments into the court registry before a hearing. Later Council action restored them. Public-safety evictions. The Committee cut the Mayor's 30-day hearing deadline for violent-crime cases, required a formal criminal charge instead of an arrest, and tripled the notice period from 10 days to 30. The full Council reversed all three changes. Repeated lease violations. The Committee removed a remedy for repeated, substantially similar lease violations within one year. It never became law.

ERAP stays: a case study in delay.

Under pandemic-era rules, courts had to halt eviction cases whenever a tenant had a pending rental assistance (ERAP) application. The Housing Committee's July 2025 report found that tenants remained protected “even if they were ultimately deemed ineligible,” and that delays “combined with the automatic stay policy extended the eviction timeline by months, and in some cases years.” As arrears “reached tens of thousands of dollars,” the report concluded, “the stays functioned more as delays to an inevitable eviction rather than a safety net.”

“The virtual calendar is repeating the same mistake,” Hunter said. “By the time a tenant sees a judge, the balance is beyond what assistance or a payment plan can fix. Delay doesn't save tenancies. It ends them.”

A policy choice, not a budget problem

“Before the pandemic, the Landlord and Tenant Court handled roughly 100 cases a day in person. Now we have fewer filings and added court capacity, yet landlords and tenants still wait months under the virtual calendar,” Hunter said. “Funding constraints do not excuse poor policy decisions.”

Blame without accountability

At an October 1 roundtable, White criticized owners “who know exactly how to game the system for maximum cash while avoiding responsibility.”

At the same roundtable, Beth Mellen, Senior Counsel for Housing Protection and Affordability at the D.C. Office of the Attorney General, said landlords were “not always being paid rent” and were “really struggling” to “pay for repairs and maintenance.”

SMOA's 2025 rent loss study found that landlords have lost more than \$1 billion in rent since

September 2021. In SMOA's [survey of 621 housing providers](#), 58 percent reported delaying or canceling maintenance and capital improvements because of unpaid rent.

Delay hurts tenants, too

According to the D.C. Office of the Tenant Advocate, eviction filings in fiscal year 2025 remained below fiscal year 2019 levels. Yet at the HIPA hearing, White acknowledged the District is "completing evictions at a historically high level." In SMOA's survey, 70 percent of respondents with completed cases waited at least a year to recover possession, and 35 percent reported cases lasting at least two years.

"Fewer filings, prolonged cases, and more completed evictions. That is not a functioning system," Hunter said. "We don't want faster evictions. We want tenants to pay rent."

Schedule the HIPA markup

SMOA demands a markup by November 30 and passage with the [60-day initial-hearing deadline](#), all other mandatory deadlines, and the owner's right-of-access provision intact.

"Schedule the markup. Pass HIPA. Fix the calendar," Hunter said. "The Council's failure to act is hurting landlords and tenants and destroying affordable housing."

About SMOA

SMOA supports small and mid-sized rental housing providers in the District of Columbia through advocacy, research, and education.

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