



•••• *Stable homes build strong communities.* ••••

Reducing Evictions in Virginia Promotes Better Educational Outcomes, More Stable Communities and Healthier Residents

Although the General Assembly passed a slate of laws in 2019 designed to reduce the exorbitant eviction rates in many cities in Virginia, there is more work to be done. Most of the new laws help renters avoid eviction after their landlords bring a court eviction action. CHACE supports measures that will prevent renters from having to go to court by helping them pay rent in a timely fashion.

What YOU Can Do in the General Assembly

Fund Eviction Prevention Programs

Funding to prevent evictions is very limited, and even these limited funds are often not available to tenants who can benefit from them the most. Limited funds often force eviction prevention programs to require renters to have an order of possession (i.e. eviction order) entered against them to qualify for assistance. By the time an eviction order has been entered, the renter owes far more than the rent, since late fees and the landlord's court costs – and often his attorney's fees – have been added to the renter's bill. More importantly, the order of possession- even if it is never executed by the sheriff – becomes a scarlet letter E on the renter, as many reputable landlords won't rent to people who have previously been evicted.

Virginia should provide funds to establish a true eviction prevention program that can provide funds for renters to pay rent and late fees (if necessary) **before** their landlord takes them to court. Such a program would go much further toward preventing evictions and stabilizing neighborhoods than programs that can only provide assistance after an order of possession is entered.

Allow More Time for Renters to “Pay and Stay” Before Going to Court

The 2019 General Assembly enacted a slate of new laws designed to help those renters most at risk of being evicted, and thus the laws focus on people who have already been sued by their landlords. But as noted above those renters must pay more money than those at an earlier point in the process, **and** they can be burdened by their history of eviction cases when seeking decent, affordable housing in the future. The General Assembly should also provide more time for renters to pay rent **before** they can be sued.

Establish a Statewide, State-Funded Renter Based Voucher Program

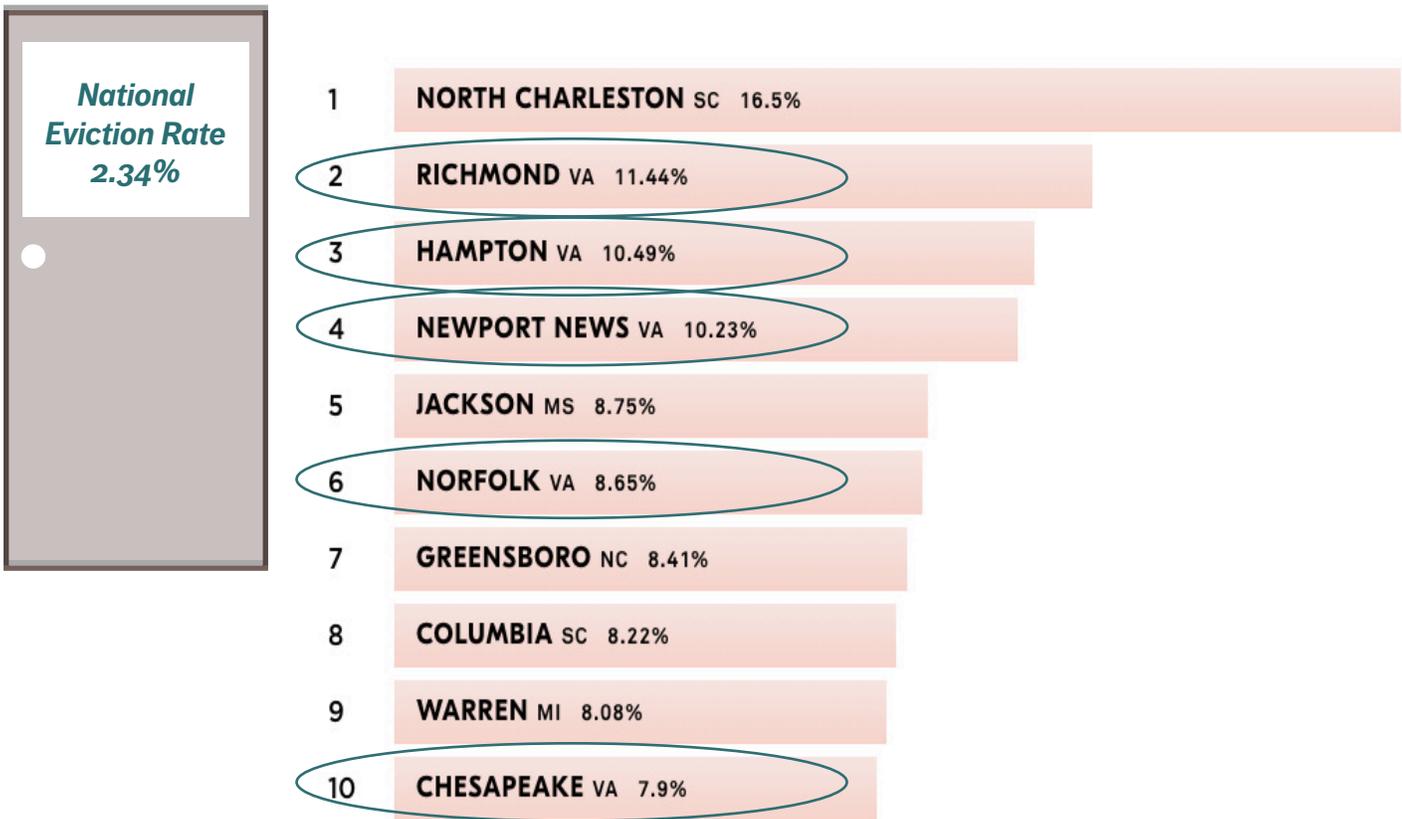
The vast majority of people who face eviction have broken their lease in only one way: they haven't paid the rent. And they rarely owe huge amounts of back rent. For example, according to a survey of eviction cases based on nonpayment of rent in the City of Richmond last year, the average amount owed was under \$900.00.

Most renters who miss part or all of a rent payment do so because they have no “rainy day fund” from which to pay an unexpected, necessary expense. They live paycheck to paycheck, partly due to the stagnation of wages for many working Virginians, but also due in part to the high cost of rent. More and more Virginians are rent burdened, paying as much as 40% or even 50% of their income for rent and utilities. Many of these overburdened renters qualify for Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers from the federal government, but that program is sorely underfunded and there are not enough vouchers for everyone who qualifies. In fact, most voucher administrators maintain waiting lists of hundreds or thousands of people for these subsidies, even though the lists close and names are added only every few years. One solution for this shortage of subsidies for renters is a **state funded deep subsidy program** for eligible renters. This could be funded through an increase in the filing fee for eviction cases, an increase in the grantor’s tax, or any number of other housing related fees.

For example, according to a survey of eviction cases based on nonpayment of rent in the City of Richmond last year, the average amount owed was under \$900.00.

In 2016, Virginia had **5** localities ranked in the **Top 10** for top evicting large cities in the country

Eviction Lab, 2016 data



Screen Capture from Eviction Lab