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Civil Rights Advocates and Local Residents Urge Georgia Lawmakers to Address Housing Affordability, Remove Hidden Fees for Renters

Today, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) joined local residents, housing advocates, and state leaders in Georgia to advocate for a bill that would help address the affordability crisis in housing by eliminating hidden fees for renters. During a press conference, LDF, Housing Justice League, and a state legislator advocated for the passage of Georgia Senate Bill 414, which would eliminate hidden fees for people renting apartments and houses in Georgia. These fees can include charges for trash pickup and facility use fees—including fees for services tenants don't receive—which can add significant additional costs for renters. Junk fees in the rental market disproportionately burden Black renters and other renters of color, making the effort to end them both a consumer issue and an issue of racial justice. According to the [National Equity Atlas](#), 66% of people with rental debt are people of color and Black renter households in the U.S. face [the highest](#) housing cost burdens, with 57% of Black households spending over 30% of their income on rent.

Currently, Georgia's tenant protection laws do not require landlords to provide accurate pricing information. SB 414, a bipartisan bill, would amend the state's Fair Business Practices Act of 1975 to boost transparency in rental pricing by banning hidden fees and requiring landlords to fully disclose the total cost of rent up front.

"They are squeezing every penny they can get out of us. When I challenged them on the legitimacy of bogus fees being charged, they could barely give me an answer," said **a Georgia resident testifying about their experience with hidden fees**. "Our monthly rent should not fluctuate between \$20-\$75+ per month. We should know what we are paying each month. We have been told by the leasing office staff that our lease agreement terms can be changed at any time. How is that legal? What is the purpose of signing a lease if the terms are not upheld?"

"It's high time we address the deceptive practices landlords have been getting away with for years. Renters deserve full transparency when signing leases," said **Senator Kim Jackson**. "Renters in Georgia should not be caught off guard with hidden charges piled on after they're locked into contracts."

"Landlords who rely on hidden fees and deceptive rental prices risk violating federal laws and putting renters at risk of experiencing housing instability, especially far too many Black people

and other renters of color and low-income renters,” said **David Wheaton, Assistant Policy Counsel at LDF**. “SB 414 would help remove barriers to affordable housing and ensure every renter in Georgia knows the true costs of finding and staying in their home. We urge lawmakers to swiftly pass this legislation.”

“Too many landlords are getting away with hiding the real cost of rent. We need legislation that would ensure any and all fees in a rental agreement are disclosed up front at the time of signing the lease. Working class Georgians, who are already feeling the weight of rising costs, are unable to properly budget their finances when they're being hit with frivolous and arbitrary junk fees,” said **Matthew Nursey, an organizer at the Housing Justice League**. “Tenants shouldn't have to pay for services they never received, nor should they be subjected to new fees for services never agreed upon. We need transparency in rental leasing to protect tenants from bad faith landlords”

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation's first civil rights legal organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957, though it was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall while he was at the NAACP. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute (TMI) is a division of LDF that undertakes innovative research and houses LDF's archive. In all media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF (do not include NAACP) and refer to the Institute as LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute or TMI.