

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Charlene Hall v. Heather Hill Property Company, LLC, et al.

Hall · No. 1:25-cv-00238-ABA · Decided February 3, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Maryland considers defendants’ motion to dismiss claims arising from alleged unlicensed operation and habitability deficiencies at Heather Hill Apartments. The court dismisses in part and permits in part claims under the Maryland Consumer Debt Collection Act, including claims based on rent collection during alleged uninhabitable conditions and related injuries. The opinion also addresses derivative claims involving the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and Maryland Collection Agency Licensing Act.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Adam B. Abelson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
DECIDED	February 3, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-00238-ABA
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed a putative class action in Maryland state court alleging violations of Maryland consumer-protection and debt-collection statutes, breach of the implied warranty of habitability and contract, negligence, and unjust enrichment. Defendants removed on diversity grounds and moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss portions of the amended complaint. The court adjudicated the motion before class-certification proceedings.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true, draws reasonable inferences in the plaintiff's favor, and asks whether the complaint states a facially plausible claim for relief under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court memorandum opinion; persuasive authority only.
PARTIES	Charlene Hall v. Heather Hill Property Company, LLC, Heather Hill Operating Company, One Wall Communities

TOPICS

landlord tenant

consumer protection

fair debt collection

negligence

motions to dismiss

PRACTICE AREAS

landlord-tenant law

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debt collection

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civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Hall adequately pleaded an MCDCA claim under Maryland Commercial Law § 14-202(8) based solely on rent-collection efforts while the property was unlicensed.
2. Whether Hall adequately pleaded an MCDCA § 14-202(8) claim based on rent collection while the apartment was both unlicensed and allegedly uninhabitable, where she alleged actual injury.
3. Whether Hall's MCDCA claims under §§ 14-202(10) and (11) failed because HHOC allegedly was not a collection agency under Maryland law or a debt collector under the FDCPA.
4. Whether Hall adequately pleaded an MCPA claim based on unlicensed rent collection and habitability-related injuries.
5. Whether Hall adequately pleaded breach of the implied warranty of habitability and violation of Maryland Real Property § 8-211.
6. Whether Hall adequately pleaded negligence despite the overlap between her negligence and contract theories.
7. Whether Hall's requests for relocation assistance, alternative housing costs, and punitive damages should be stricken at the pleadings stage.

HOLDINGS

1. A tenant cannot maintain an MCDCA § 14-202(8) claim based solely on a landlord's attempt to collect rent while unlicensed without alleging that the landlord's collection activity caused actual injury, such as legally compelled payment pursuant to a judgment or eviction order. Hall alleged no such compulsion or resulting injury, so this theory was dismissed with prejudice.
2. Hall adequately pleaded an MCDCA § 14-202(8) claim where she alleged that HHOC collected rent while the property was unlicensed and uninhabitable and that the conditions caused actual injuries, including medical expenses. This theory survived dismissal.
3. Hall's MCDCA § 14-202(11) claim was not subject to dismissal on the ground that HHOC was not a debt collector under the FDCPA. The MCDCA incorporates specified FDCPA conduct provisions but uses the broader MCDCA definition of collector.
4. Hall failed to state an MCDCA § 14-202(10) claim because she did not allege that HHOC was a collection agency under the Maryland Collection Agency Licensing Act. The claim was dismissed without prejudice.
5. Hall adequately pleaded an MCPA claim to the extent she alleged that the lack of licensure was associated with uninhabitable conditions that caused actual injury, including medical-care expenses. Her

claim based only on misrepresentation of authority to collect rent while unlicensed, without actual injury, was dismissed with prejudice.

6. Hall adequately pleaded that the apartments were unfit for human habitation, that defendants had notice of the defects, and that defendants had a reasonable opportunity to repair them but failed to do so. The motion to dismiss Count Two was denied.
7. Hall adequately pleaded negligence. A landlord's undertaking of repair or habitability obligations may support an independent tort claim when the obligations are performed negligently, and statutory violations may establish a prima facie negligence case without separate proof of actual notice.
8. Hall's request for punitive damages was dismissed because the complaint did not allege detailed facts supporting actual malice, ill will, or intent to injure.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“But any MCDCA claim premised on HHOC attempting to collect rent while unlicensed when it knew it did not have the right to do so and while the apartment was uninhabitable, and where Ms. Hall suffered damages as a result of those conditions, will not be dismissed.”

“The Court will deny the motion to dismiss as to Count Two alleging breach of implied warranty of habitability and violation of § 8-211.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Hall had lived since 2017 at Heather Hill Apartments, a 459-unit complex in Temple Hills, Maryland, operated by the defendant entities. She alleged that the property operated without required rental licenses and that her apartment suffered extensive habitability problems, including mold, water damage, pests, defective appliances, lack of heat and hot water, and fire-safety deficiencies. She further alleged that the defendants ignored or inadequately addressed repeated maintenance requests and that the conditions caused health problems and medical expenses. She also alleged that defendants collected rent while unlicensed and pursued or threatened rent-collection activity.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Hall originally filed the action in the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, Maryland. Defendants removed it to the United States District Court for the District of Maryland and moved to dismiss. Hall filed an amended complaint, and the parties stipulated to hold her class-certification motion in abeyance pending resolution of the motion to dismiss. The court granted the motion in part and denied it in part.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- King v. Rubenstein, 825 F.3d 206 (4th Cir. 2016)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544 (2007)

- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009)
- *Alexander v. Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC*, 23 F.4th 370 (4th Cir. 2022)
- *Chavis v. Blibaum & Associates, P.A.*, 476 Md. 534 (2021)
- *Mills v. Galyn Manor Homeowner's Association, Inc.*, 239 Md. App. 663 (2018)
- *Assanah-Carroll v. Law Offices of Edward J. Maher, P.C.*, 480 Md. 394 (2022)
- *Golt v. Phillips*, 308 Md. 1 (1986)
- *McDaniel v. Baranowski*, 419 Md. 560 (2011)
- *CitaraManis v. Greenbriar Condominium, Phase II Council of Unit Owners*, 328 Md. 142 (1992)
- *Zambali v. Shulman Rogers, P.A.*, 2024 WL 3161590 (D. Md. June 25, 2024)
- *Exum v. Kane*, 2025 WL 834014 (D. Md. Mar. 17, 2025), opinion clarified, 2025 WL 2049985 (D. Md. July 22, 2025)
- *Young-Bey v. Southern Management Corp., Inc.*, 2018 WL 4922349 (D. Md. Oct. 10, 2018)
- *Richwind Joint Venture 4 v. Brunson*, 335 Md. 661 (1994)
- *Smith v. Westminster Management, LLC*, 257 Md. App. 336 (2023), *aff'd*, 486 Md. 616 (2024)
- *Aleti v. Metropolitan Baltimore, LLC*, 479 Md. 686 (2022)
- *Polakoff v. Turner*, 385 Md. 467 (2005)
- *Brooks v. Lewin Realty III, Inc.*, 378 Md. 70 (2003)
- *Mesmer v. Maryland Automobile Insurance Fund*, 353 Md. 241 (1999)
- *Blondell v. Littlepage*, 413 Md. 96 (2010)
- *Jacques v. First National Bank of Maryland*, 307 Md. 527 (1986)
- *Bocchini v. Gorn Management Co.*, 69 Md. App. 1 (1986)
- *Thompson v. Clemens*, 96 Md. 196 (1903)
- *Farley v. Yerman*, 231 Md. 444 (1963)
- *Marion v. Anchor Hocking, LLC*, 792 F. Supp. 3d 629 (D. Md. 2025)
- *Harris v. Dow Chemical Co.*, 2020 WL 6874326 (D. Md. Nov. 23, 2020)
- *Exxon Mobil Corp. v. Albright*, 433 Md. 303 (2013)
- *Spencer v. Henderson-Webb, Inc.*, 81 F. Supp. 2d 582 (D. Md. 1998)
- *United States v. National Financial Services, Inc.*, 98 F.3d 131 (4th Cir. 1996)