

'I feel like I have failed my kids' | DeKalb Co. mother of four in losing battle with landlord over unlivable apartment

Precious Bankston says she and her children have been living with leaks, wet floors and mold since August and finally moved out while still having to pay rent.



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SCOTSDALE, Ga. — A working mother of four children has been living in her car while her children pack into her sister's small home, all because, she said, their apartment in DeKalb County has been unlivable, with major plumbing leaks and mold.

Management has been trying to make repairs but still won't let the family move to another unit, in the meantime. On Tuesday, an inspector with the county's code enforcement was checking out units but would not comment.

Precious Bankston and her children live in a small, three-bedroom unit at [Oak Forest Apartments, in the Scottdale community of DeKalb County](#). In August, Bankston said, the water began leaking from pipes inside the walls and onto the floors of her bathroom, kitchen and bedroom.

Management kept sending in a repair crew to stop the leaks, but "it just kept flooding," she said, creating a mess in her apartment. Her tile floors were wet, her carpeting was soggy, and there was mold because of all the water.

And yet, Bankston, whose children are ages four through 13, is somehow blaming herself; she resorted to social media last week for help — nowhere else to turn, she said.

"Somebody! Hear me! I'm praying now for help, for me and my babies," she [said in a video on her Instagram account](#).

In an interview Monday, Bankston said that management at Oak Forest Apartments refused to move the family to a different unit. And the landlord is not commenting about any of this to 11Alive.

"I can't cook, I don't have a stove," she said Monday, "We have no sanitation. We can't wash. We can't do anything here.... I feel like this is all my fault. I feel like I failed my kids because the apartment complex failed me. I have reached out numerous times trying to find a lawyer; everybody's denying me when they hear it's these apartments."

Repairs inside the apartment did begin — again — this past Friday. And Bankston said that, now, it is all worse: rats have been coming inside, through the holes that crews punched through the floor.

She said the complex manager told her the company would not pay for a hotel for her and her children, even for a night, but suggested that Bankston have her renter's insurance policy pay for a hotel. Bankston said she does not have renters insurance.

"Renters versus landlords" is a continuing battle everywhere, and attorneys who specialize in renters' rights in Georgia all say that renters should document everything — which Precious Bankston has done — either for reimbursement claims later, or to get out of a lease.



"You can say that your landlord has constructively evicted you if the property is no longer habitable," Atlanta attorney Christopher Stanton said in January.

Bankston said it's like she's trapped, partly because HUD subsidizes her rent.

"I can't afford to get out of here and pay three times the rent, I can't," she said. "That's why I chose this route (of leasing a HUD-subsidized apartment). And this route is to help us, to assist us so we can get out of here and we can do better."

As of Monday night, Bankston was still trying to find out from her landlord when her apartment would be repaired and put back together, so her kids could move out of her sister's, so she could move out of her car, and so they could be together at home again.

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