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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 797

State Court Administrator - Warrants of Restitution and Writs of Possession - Data Collection and Reporting

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Molly Amster, Baltimore Director for Jews United for Justice

I am testifying in favor of HB 797 as a resident of Baltimore City's 43rd District and as the Baltimore Director of Jews United for Justice. JUFJ organizes 5,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice.

Jewish law (*halakhah*) provides guidance for tenant/landlord relationships and responsibilities with the goal of housing stability. A visit to the website for Michael Desmond's Book, Evicted, hints at why that was important to the rabbis: "without a home, everything else falls apart."¹ Desmond and others' research of the social impacts of eviction make clear that our entire society would do better if we worked to keep people in their homes.

*Eviction causes a family to lose their home...expelled from their community and their children have to switch schools. Families regularly lose their possessions...A legal eviction comes with a court record, which can prevent families from relocating to decent housing in a safe neighborhood, because many landlords screen for recent evictions...eviction causes job loss, as the stressful and drawn-out process of being forcibly expelled from a home causes people to make mistakes at work and lose their job. Eviction also has been shown to affect people's mental health...The evidence strongly indicates that **eviction is not just a condition of poverty, it is a cause of it.**²*

The data that Eviction Lab was able to gather across the country has allowed lawmakers, researchers, and advocates to develop and implement innovative strategies to curb the eviction crisis. Unfortunately here in Maryland, we don't have that kind of data and we can't address a problem that we don't understand.

Housing stability reduces poverty and crime, strengthens communities, helps children and their parents thrive, reduces homelessness (and its associated costs to state and local government), and positively impacts health. Data collection is essential if we are going to understand the scope of the eviction problem in Maryland - only then we can collaboratively work to address it. **We respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 797.**

¹ <http://evictedbook.com/>

² <https://evictionlab.org/why-eviction-matters/#eviction-impact>