

## Testimony in SUPPORT of [SB0910](#): The Covid-19 Eviction and Housing Relief Act

Position: FAVORABLE with amendment

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Maryland has been in a housing crisis for a long time, and there is a tsunami of evictions on the horizon due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the end of the eviction moratorium. An estimated 150,000 Maryland households were at risk of eviction at the end of 2020.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that expiring eviction bans across the country led to hundreds of thousands of additional Coronavirus cases.<sup>2</sup> Given that evictions accelerate COVID-19 transmission by increasing household crowding and decreasing individuals' ability to comply with social distancing directives, it is essential that Maryland pass legislation to ensure renters are not evicted through no fault of their own. Maintaining people in their homes, especially during the Covid-19 crisis, saves lives.

SB0910 provides the relief Maryland tenants desperately need to maintain a home. It establishes the Maryland Rental Relief Fund, providing financial relief for both landlords and tenants. The Act also extends and expands the current eviction moratorium in place for renters. It also prohibits rent increases and late fees, requires landlords to work with tenants prior to starting eviction proceedings, provides tenants an affirmative defense in evictions due to a substantial loss of income, and creates essential systems to ensure renters know their legal rights. Maryland tenants desperately need these protections. It would also be helpful to consider **amending the bill** to add protection for renters being evicted for modifications, so that landlords provide comparable alternate accommodations and moving expenses.

The Maryland legislature must act now. SB0910 will ensure Maryland renters maintain their homes during this crisis, will increase housing stability. As Pope Francis made clear during his visit to Washington DC in 2015, "There is no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for the lack of housing." Now is the time to fix Maryland's eviction system. **We urge the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB0910**

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<sup>1</sup> Stout Risius Ross, LLC, Estimation of Households Experiencing Rental Shortfall and Potentially Facing Eviction, <http://bit.ly/stoutevictiondata> (select "Maryland" in drop-down menu).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/27/evictions-have-led-to-hundreds-of-thousands-of-extra-covid-cases-.html>