

January 28, 2021

Thomas R. Knoche, Board Member
Broadview Apartments, LLC
105 W. 39th Street
Baltimore, MD 21210

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL SB154/HB18
Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Action - Right to Counsel

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Thomas R. Knoche, on behalf of Broadview Apartments, LLC

The Broadview Apartments, LLC family ownership Board encourages the Maryland legislature to adopt SB154/HB18, which would establish a right to counsel for low income tenants. The Broadview Apartments, LLC owns 500 units of rental housing on W. 39th Street in Baltimore City, where approximately 1,300 people are housed.

As a landlord, we might not be expected to support this legislation. But we do, for four reasons:

- (1) We see first-hand the impact the pandemic has had on the people who rent from us. Times are tougher than many ever expected to see, and the financial hardship comes at no fault of their own.
- (2) Our costs go down when turnover is reduced, so we want residents to live at our developments for as long as they can. Displacement is bad for them, and the turnover costs are bad for us.
- (3) Displacement can lead to homelessness, and the latter is to be avoided at all cost. The human cost is beyond measure. The cost to society – specifically taxpayers -- can be measured. Study after study, over decades, confirm that the most cost-effective way to address homelessness is to avoid it by preventing displacement, providing sufficient affordable housing units, and preventive social services.
- (4) Finally, we consider ourselves fortunate. Everyone needs a roof over their head, so most tenants see rent as a priority bill that must get paid. Consequently, our revenue has dropped by a small amount compared to what many other family-owned businesses have faced during this pandemic. Our business will survive, and so will many others that own rental property. Tragically, many other businesses will not. We can help our tenants get through this difficult time, and we should.

We consider decent housing to be a basic human right. The right to counsel will increase fairness and stability in the housing market long after the pandemic has waned. We believe this legislation will benefit landlords, as well as renters, in the State of MD. **We urge timely action to pass SB154/HB18.**