

**BRIAN E. FROSH**  
*Attorney General*

**ELIZABETH F. HARRIS**  
*Chief Deputy Attorney General*

**CAROLYN QUATTROCKI**  
*Deputy Attorney General*



**WILLIAM D. GRUHN**  
*Chief*  
Consumer Protection Division

Writer's Fax No.

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION**

Writer's Direct Dial No.  
410-576-6986  
kwilponewelborn@oag.state.md.us

March 25, 2022

To: The Honorable Kumar Barve  
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn, Assistant Attorney General  
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 384 – Landlord and Tenant - Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental  
Assistance Determination (SUPPORT)

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The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) supports Senate Bill 384 sponsored by Senator Shelly Hettleman, which would assist the collective efforts of state and federal leaders to stymie the disruptive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on renter households.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to financially impact renters resulting in housing instability for renter households across Maryland. Through the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan, the federal government has awarded Maryland over \$250 million dollars in rental assistance and eviction prevention funds.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding, the Division has received repeated complaints from consumers, advocates, and rental assistance program administrators that many Maryland landlords are refusing to provide the information necessary for tenants to complete applications for rental relief assistance or to accept rental assistance funds awarded to eligible renters. Instead, many Maryland landlords are filing failure to pay rent actions seeking to evict vulnerable renters who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic from their housing. Senate Bill 384 will assist rental relief assistance providers in successfully distributing Maryland’s share of the federal rental assistance funds and bolster housing stability for Maryland renter households as the COVID-19 pandemic’s deleterious effects persist.

Accordingly, the Division requests that the Environment and Transportation Committee give Senate Bill 384 a favorable report.

cc: The Honorable Shelly Hettleman  
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee

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<sup>1</sup>See <https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/03/17/governor-hogan-submits-1-08-billion-supplemental-budget-focused-on-rental-assistance-higher-education-and-transportation/>.