



**Hearing before the Judicial Proceedings Committee, Feb. 15, 2022**

**SB 384 - Landlord and Tenant – Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental Assistance**

**Position: SUPPORT (Favorable)**

**February 15, 2022**

Honorable Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, Inc. (“St. Ambrose”) to urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 384, which gives Maryland Courts the authority to pause an eviction proceeding while a tenant seeks rental assistance and prevents landlords who refuse rental assistance funds from seeking eviction for non-payment of rent.

St. Ambrose is a Baltimore based non-profit whose mission is to create, preserve, and maintain equal housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income people primarily in Baltimore City. The Legal Services Department at St. Ambrose provides pro bono legal services which helps to preserve housing stability for an average of 1000 residents a year. Among these are people facing the possibility of eviction for failure to pay rent. In October 2021 alone, our staff of four attorneys received nearly 60 calls from tenants seeking legal advice.

One of our clients is a mother who had to leave her job because of medical complications during her pregnancy last fall. When she couldn’t afford her rent, she applied for Baltimore City’s emergency rental assistance program. Though she qualified for help, her landlord refused to participate. Instead, they filed multiple failure to pay rent actions against her and nearly evicted her (and her kids) twice, including one eviction scheduled for just *this week*. Now, her landlord has finally decided to accept rental assistance funds — a win for my client! — but she still endured months of extreme stress, sleepless nights, and fear about finding a safe and healthy place for her kids to live. She is not alone: in a survey of pro bono attorneys across Maryland, 73% had cases where a client faced eviction while a rental assistance application was pending. Despite Maryland’s record-setting funding for eviction prevention, in the second half of 2021, there were nearly 27,000 eviction cases filed for non-payment of rent *per month*.

SB 384 would give judges discretion to stay proceedings as rental assistance applications are evaluated and incentivize landlords to accept rental assistance funds from tenants before seeking an eviction. Accordingly, we ask for your favorable report on SB 384. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gerard Ioab", is written over the typed name and title.

Gerard Ioab  
Executive Director  
St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center