

SB0384, Landlord and Tenant - Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental Assistance Determination
Testimony in **Support**

To: Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Arielle Juberg, Baltimore MD 21234

My name is Arielle Juberg. I am a resident of Baltimore County in District 8. I belong to Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) in Baltimore. SURJ is also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United Maryland. I am testifying in **support** of SB0384, Landlord and Tenant - Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental Assistance Determination

This bill allows for a stay of eviction proceedings when a tenant can show they have applied for rental assistance and are awaiting a determination. It also prohibits the landlord from refusing to accept rental assistance funds as payment or collecting the debt through other judicial actions.

SB0384 matters to me because I have witnessed how our system can benefit and empower landlords while giving tenants few options. As a former tenant, I've signed rental agreements that forfeited my tenant rights. My landlords could raise the rent for any reason and levy fees caused by their accounting mistakes. While I have interacted with professional landlords who treated tenants with curtesy, our interactions have still been marked by a wide power gap. Being able to evict a tenant when they've applied for rental assistance is another example of this power gap.

If tenants have applied for rental assistance, they should be allowed to live in their homes until a determination is made. Tenants should not be punished when overburdened agencies take months to process applications.

The [National Equity Atlas](#) estimates rent debt using US Census and Treasury data. On January 30, they reported an *estimated 105,000 households were behind on their rent in Maryland*. An eviction judgment makes it harder to find housing, and the pandemic continues to endanger those without stable housing. The sudden transition of eviction is especially difficult for children, who are part of 51% of households in arrears. Worsened school performance, increased drop-out rates, higher rates of adolescent violence, and worse health outcomes are just some of the negative outcomes [social scientists have documented](#) among children who have experienced eviction.

We know that safe, stable housing has far-reaching economic, health, and social benefits to individuals, families, and communities and is key to reducing racial inequities. This is even truer during the ongoing public health and economic crisis. "Eviction," our state's [Attorney General Brian E. Frosh has said](#), "is not simply a condition of poverty. It's a root cause. It perpetuates a cycle that can last for generations." The National Equity Atlas estimates that 74% of tenants behind on their rent in our state are people of color, despite forming less than half the state population. Helping people of color remain in their homes ensures we don't continue perpetuating long-standing inequities in housing and eviction policies.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **support** SB0384. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service.