

HB0691, Landlord and Tenant and Wrongful Detainer Actions – Eviction Prevention Services
Testimony in **Support**

To: Chair Clippinger, Chair Barve, members of the House Judiciary Committee, and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Arielle Juberg

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 working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am testifying in **support** of HB0691, Landlord and Tenant and Wrongful Detainer Actions – Eviction Prevention Services.

I care about HB0691 because evictions are weakening our communities. I've lived in Baltimore for close to ten years. In those years, I've seen 'luxury' apartment buildings muscle their way into once-affordable neighborhoods. It is rare to see affordable housing units being built. Tents with homeless individuals have become much more visible. A camping tent isn't a safe, long-term solution for housing, particularly during this cold winter. I can't pass by and pretend that a row of tents on the highway median is a normal or good situation for our city. One way to prevent and reduce homelessness is to ensure renters have access to eviction prevention services and equal footing in rental court.

HB0691 is needed so that renters can access the services they need. This bill offers both renters and landlords the power to request and receive postponement of legal proceedings while either party accesses legal counsel, calls witnesses, and/or collects documents. When eviction prevention services—which include counseling, dispute resolution, and civil legal aid—are available in the court building, judges shall allow a recess so either party can use those services.

The uncertainty of the last two years has meant many low-income renters find themselves facing eviction. Furthermore, renters are disproportionately persons of color. Even though Maryland has over \$400 million in federal rental assistance available, it takes time to gather necessary documents, apply, and process applications. Over 100,000 Maryland households are behind on rent and still struggling to access that federal money.

Our communities benefit when people are housed. With a secure home, workers can do their best work and support our economy. With a secure home, students can concentrate and learn. With a secure home, parents and children can nurture healthy relationships, avoiding tension and abuse. It is in our communities' interest to prevent evictions. Yet, in the second half of 2021, an average of 650 evictions took place each month. Let's reduce evictions and avoid them whenever possible for the good of everyone.

For all these reasons, I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0691**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

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