

To whom it may concern,

My name is Cecil Millen, and I work for Housing Initiative Partnership as a Tenant Outreach Specialist. Our organization works both in Montgomery County and Prince George's County offering a variety of financial and housing services including offering affordable housing options for first-time homebuyers, operating affordable residences for senior citizens and artists, as well as counseling clients on credit, budgeting, finding affordable housing, and providing many other vital services.

HB 824 would be a simple, prudent step that would have extraordinarily far-reaching benefits for the future of housing in Maryland.

In my work across Montgomery County, I interact with hundreds of people who range from housing insecure to imminently homeless. While the physical eviction takes less than an hour, and the legal process takes a few months, the consequences of an eviction for tenants can last years. An eviction is trauma.

HB 824 will go some distance to ensure that the resources that Maryland commits to helping its housing insecure residents are used more efficiently, and to greater effect. Families have expressed incredible trepidation and outright terror at the thought of their children arriving home from school to find their clothes and toys on the sidewalk, their life suddenly and inexplicably uprooted, and the supportive relationship networks in their communities and their schools rendered useless. Over time, HB 824 will allow organizations like ours the opportunity to find these families earlier and connect them to the services that will allow them to obtain renewed housing stability with minimal disruption to the education and safety of their children.

Given the toll of the Covid-19 pandemic on both human life and educational security, it is a moral imperative that we equip the public servants of this state with the resources we need to do our jobs to the best of our ability.

For these reasons we ask that the committee issue a favorable report on HB 824. We cannot allow our families and our children to fall further behind.

Sincerely,

Cecil Millen