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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB36
Holding Illegally Operating Landlords Accountable bill (HB36)

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and member of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern from Chevy Chase in District 16 and I am a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda. I am providing this testimony in strong support of HB36, Holding Illegally Operating Landlords Accountable.

Our Jewish tradition's primary concern regarding landlord-tenant relations is the question of permanence. Landlords are forbidden from evicting tenants without due warning and may not evict tenants during the winter months, when new housing will be hard to find. According to the great Jewish sage and philosopher, Moses Maimonides, a landlord must give the tenant sufficient notice before terminating a lease “so that the tenant can look for another place and will not be abandoned in the street”. The landlord, Maimonides suggests, will be held responsible if a tenant becomes homeless as the result of eviction.

We must use this strong advice when reforming our laws to hold landlords accountable. In 2021 The Maryland Court of Appeals ruled that illegally operating landlords can still use the expedited eviction process, enabling landlords to violate local rental licensing and inspection laws, and lease the property again without eliminating any hazards or obtaining a license. **Licensing laws protect public health and safety through periodic inspections. No landlord is above the law. This bill passed the 2022 General Assembly but was vetoed by Governor Hogan.**

We hope this session that both Houses of the General Assembly will pass HB36 to assure that landlords operating illegally cannot evict tenants using this expedited process. As our rabbis taught us, giving permanent housing to our citizens and being responsible for homelessness after an eviction is of the utmost importance for any society. Decent, safe, accessible, and affordable housing is a basic human right and Jewish tradition recognizes the importance of the home for we are taught that the home is a *mikdash me'at*—a mini sanctuary, a sacred place.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB36.