



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB036

Real Property – Actions to Repossess – Proof of Rental Licensure

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable David Moon
Vice Chair, House Judiciary Committee

Committee Members
House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Ioana Stoica
Policy Advocate

DATE: January 18, 2023

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that helps Marylanders reach higher-wage jobs in industries that need more skilled workers. While we conduct workforce training to move people into employment with career paths that pay higher wages, we also advocate for policies that remove barriers to employment such as the lack of access to affordable and stable housing. Because housing is critical to obtaining and maintaining employment, JOTF urges you to **vote favorably on House Bill 036** as a means of protecting tenants from unsafe living conditions and providing housing stability for low-income workers.

Steady employment is predicated on affordable housing stability. A [2016 Harvard study](#) showed that stable housing has a direct impact on an individual's ability to maintain employment. This study found that the likelihood of job loss was up to 22 percent higher for individuals who did not have secure housing. Even further, lost employment disrupts the ability to maintain housing – creating a vicious cycle of poverty for Maryland's most vulnerable. At JOTF, through our experience in workforce training, we have found that our workforce program participants are primarily renters and experience housing access and insecurity issues similar to those discussed in the Harvard study.

HB 036 is identical to SB 563, which passed the House (90-45) and Senate (47-0) in 2022 but was vetoed by Gov. Hogan. HB 036 would stop landlords who do not have an operating license from using streamlined court processes (Failure To Pay Rent, Tenant Holding Over, and Breach of Lease) from evicting tenants in localities that have a licensing law. Licensing laws protect public health and safety through periodic inspections. Like any other business, if a landlord wants to file suit in Maryland courts, they must be licensed in any jurisdiction that requires licensure. When unlicensed landlords successfully use eviction court, it encourages all landlords to ignore licensing laws and increases the risk of tenants being subjected to health and safety hazards. HB 036, therefore, provides vulnerable tenants some degree of housing protection while still allowing landlords to take advantage of available eviction options other than the streamlined process.

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

JOTF understands the fragile relationship that exists between housing and employment: to be stable in employment, jobseekers and wage earners must have consistent, reliable, and safe places in which to live. As a member of Renters United Maryland, a statewide coalition of renters, organizers, and advocates, JOTF urges a favorable report on House Bill 036.

For more information on how HB 036 supports workforce development please contact Ioana Stoica, JOTF Policy Advocate at ioana@jotf.org or 240-643-0059.