

HB 1117_JoShifrin_FAV

Date of Hearing: February 27, 2024

Jo Shifrin

Bethesda, MD 20817

TESTIMONY ON HB 1117 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

**Failure to Repair Serious and Dangerous Defects - Tenant Remedies
(Tenant Safety Act of 2024)**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Jo Shifrin

My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 1117, Failure to Repair Serious and Dangerous Defects - Tenant Remedies (Tenant Safety Act of 2024).

I have been a resident of Montgomery County for the past 10 years. My support for this legislation comes from my grounding in Jewish values: Judaism offers a moral framework: *Tikkun Olam*, an obligation to make the world a more fair and equitable place for people to live; and *Dei Machsoro*, to make sure that everyone has what they need to live and thrive. The need for safe housing is central to Jewish thought. Jewish texts speak about the obligation of landlords and tenants, about how homes should be built safely.

The existing rent escrow process is inadequate in ensuring remedies that tenants can use to deal with a landlord's failure to repair serious and dangerous defects that impact their health and safety. Tenants who live in multi-unit complexes who all face similar threats to health and safety should have the ability to join collectively as plaintiffs to hold their landlord accountable. Meaningful sanctions need to be imposed upon landlords who allow dangerous conditions and defects to exist in premises that they lease. Additionally, an effective mechanism must be established to ensure that repairs are made.

No one should have to live in an unhealthy and unsafe environment while having to pay for the privilege of doing so. This bill provides a remedy for this issue by allowing a single tenant, a group of tenants, or a tenant organization to request injunctive relief or money damages and attorneys' fees if the landlord refuses to make repairs or correct the problem in a reasonable period of time after being notified.

This bill does not require any and all issues that a tenant has to be covered. It simply requires that conditions and defects that constitute –or will constitute if not promptly corrected– a fire hazard or a serious and substantial threat to life, health, and/or safety of the tenants must be

addressed. This is fair to the tenants, who are paying for their use of the property, and it is fair to the landlords, who should want to maintain the property in order to protect their investment.

Tenants in Maryland deserve to live in a building that is not dangerous to their well being.

Therefore, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 1117.