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TESTIMONY ON HB0477/SB0644 - FAVORABLE

Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination Provisions

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

FROM: Jacob Simone

My name is Jacob Simone and I am a resident of District 40. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0477/SB0644, Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Just Cause Termination Provisions.

I am a landlord with a rental property in District 10 in Baltimore County, and I rent and live in an apartment in Baltimore City. I am a proud member of the Jewish community and belong to Beth Am Synagogue in Reservoir Hill. Jewish teachings are explicit about the importance of safe and stable housing for people and families. Every person, regardless of race or income, should have a safe and stable home.

The tenants of my rental property are a married couple who had trouble paying their monthly rent this year because one of them lost their job. Instead of evicting them, I worked with them to pay off their balance - and I'm still doing so. We all experience hardship, and losing the roof over your head as a result makes it exponentially harder to recover from whatever is ailing us. Individuals or families that lose their home face dire consequences from potential homelessness to difficulties accessing employment, transportation, health care, food, education. Especially when there isn't a breach of the lease, keeping people in their homes should be a priority.

While HB0477 would still give landlords the ability to evict or not renew a lease due to the tenants' lack of rent payment, this legislation is an important step to keeping renters in their homes *without infringing on the rights of landlords*. This bill would allow counties to adopt "just cause" laws that meet local needs to require landlords to renew residential leases unless they have a "just cause" to terminate the lease, such as wanting to occupy the property themselves, having a close relative move in, taking the property off the market, and tenant breach of lease.

Keep tenants in their homes. Make landlords AT LEAST cite a reason for non-renewal of a lease. We all benefit when our neighbors are housed and have housing stability. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0477/SB0644.