

4/2/2024



Danielle Herrmann
Takoma Park/Silver Spring, MD 20912

TESTIMONY ON HB477 - FAVORABLE

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

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

FROM: Danielle Herrmann, MSW, LCSW-C, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Danielle Herrmann and I am a resident of District 20. As a Maryland Medical Clinical Social Worker and an elderly member of Jews United for Justice, I am submitting this testimony in support of HB477, Local Good Cause Eviction enabling legislation, on behalf of JUFJ. Jews United for Justice organizes over 6,000 Jewish Marylanders and allies in support of local campaigns for social, racial, and economic justice.

Helping individuals and families navigate the challenges of living and taking action to advance the safety, dignity, and worth of every person, especially the most vulnerable among us, is a Jewish value. No one should live without a roof over their head, or the threat of landlord retaliation looming over them. Stories I have heard during my time as a Social Worker have furthered my belief in the importance of safe and stable housing.

I made a promise to my pediatric hospice patient before she died that I would share her story of living with housing insecurity. Originally from Guatemala, her name translates to "Star of the Sea." At age 11, she was the sole surviving clinical trial patient of her NIH research cohort. Knowing she was going to die she proudly stated, "I'm contributing to medicine to help find a cure for other children." Her father was a laborer and her mother cared for her 24/7, while raising her younger sister. As a family, they were also grieving the stillborn death of her brother. Due to a water main pipe leak in their yard that their landlord refused to fix, they could not afford to pay rent along with the astronomical water bills the leak was causing. They lived in terror of landlord retaliation and the weaponization of eviction.

When I conducted home health and hospice visits across Central Maryland, I frequently encountered devastating stories like my patients'. I met renters whose landlords refused to make essential repairs. Tenants shared with me their fears and experiences of landlord retaliation, lease renewal denial, and eviction for having complained about the conditions they

were living in. I witnessed the palpable strain on adults and children facing unbearable housing insecurity. I heard innumerable accounts of the adverse ripple effects of eviction displacement, which devastated their health, emotional stability, and human dignity. I saw the inequitable impact on brown, Black, Indigenous and immigrant, Elderly, Disabled, and LGBTQIA+ individuals, households, and communities.

“Just cause” eviction laws address these issues by providing essential remedies and safeguards for individuals, families, and those of us who advocate on their behalf. By promoting stable housing conditions, these laws strengthen neighborhood ties and community mental health. The House amended HB477 to add a small landlord exemption and expand the list for what constitutes “good cause.” **On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I respectfully and strongly urge this committee to support any sponsor amendments that address loopholes and ambiguities and return a favorable report on HB477.**