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February 12, 2021

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 861 – Real Property - Landlord and Tenant - Reusable Tenant Screening
Reports (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General supports House Bill 861 sponsored by Delegate Palakovich Carr because it increases consumer choice and prevents unfairness in Maryland's rental marketplace.

House Bill 861 allows consumers to obtain their own independent tenant screening reports (*i.e.*, background checks, including credit and employment checks) and provide those reports to prospective landlords willing to accept them. Presently, when Marylanders apply for rental units, they are subject to each property's application process and application fee even when multiple properties are managed by the same larger management company. The burden of paying multiple application fees and re-submitting duplicative application information can limit a consumer's choice in rental housing. Allowing consumers to obtain their own tenant report and provide it to prospective landlords would allow consumers to better navigate the rental market, increase choice, and limit the financial and time expenditures required of consumers for repetitive applications.

Moreover, allowing consumers to preemptively obtain a reusable tenant screening report allows consumers to better understand the information used by landlords in approving or denying rental applications. Presenting consumers with this information before submitting an application will also allow them to take steps to improve, correct, or dispute information contained within the report that could adversely impact their rental applications. Bill 861 will assist consumers to more affordably obtain rental properties.

For these reasons the Division requests that the Environment and Transportation Committee give House Bill 861 a favorable report.

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cc: The Honorable Palakovich Carr
Members, Environment and Transportation Committee