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January 22, 2021

Committee Chair Kumar P. Barve  
Committee Vice-Chair Dana M. Stein  
Environment & Transportation Committee  
House Office Building, Room 251  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Support for House Bill 104, Landlord–Tenant – Nonrenewal of Lease – Notice Requirements**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership (BRHP) in support of House Bill 104 to increase the notice required for lease nonrenewal. We encourage the committee to file a favorable report.

BRHP is a nonprofit organization that operates the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program for thousands of families throughout the Baltimore region. Our mission is to expand housing choices for families with low incomes who have historically been excluded from housing in well-resourced neighborhoods, helping them to access and transition successfully to safe, healthy, and economically vibrant communities. We do this by providing rental assistance in the form of the Housing Choice Voucher and coupling that with counseling supports for our families as they move from areas of concentrated poverty to areas of opportunity in Baltimore City and the five surrounding counties.

Families participating in our program often stay in the same home for many years at a time. We encourage families to minimize moves unless there is an unresolvable problem with their unit, the property owner, or the neighborhood. We provide counseling and mediation to reconcile problems whenever possible. These policies are based on a body of research which shows that the neighborhoods people grow up in affect their long-term outcomes<sup>1</sup>, and that multiple moves can be harmful to children’s school performance and social-emotional function<sup>2</sup>.

When families decide to move, we encourage them to remain in an opportunity area. When they are forced to move because the property owner decides not to renew their lease, it can be significantly more challenging to stay in an opportunity area, much less in the same neighborhood. The adverse effects of moving on children include disruption to their school

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<sup>1</sup> [movers\\_paper1.pdf \(opportunityinsights.org\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [HHM Brief - Is Moving During Childhood Harmful 2.pdf \(macfound.org\)](#)



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routine caused by changing districts. The more lead time a family has to search for a new home, the better their chance of finding one in the same school district.

Sudden lease nonrenewal has other disruptive effects. Too often, families are forced to stay in hotels, or occasionally in emergency temporary housing because they cannot find an affordable unit before their lease ends. The strain of getting children to and from school while living in temporary housing and searching for a home can be unmanageable. Many of these situations could easily be avoided with earlier notification of a property owner's intention to not renew the lease.

Under the current CDC moratorium on non-emergency evictions, lease nonrenewal should not lead to displacement if the tenant can demonstrate that it will lead to an increased risk of COVID-19 exposure. However, given that some Maryland district courts are still hearing tenant holding over cases, more protection is needed. Requiring earlier notice of lease nonrenewal will give tenants the opportunity to seek counsel and prepare a defense based on the CDC guidelines or other circumstances.

Property owners are already required to give notice of nonrenewal of month-to-month leases at least two months ahead of time in Montgomery County and Baltimore City. Other states that require 60 days' notice include Delaware, Georgia, New York, and Oregon. New York requires 90 days' notice if the tenant has lived in the unit for more than 2 years.

Two- or three-months' notice of lease nonrenewal is a minimal protection from homelessness and needless disruption, especially given that many jurisdictions have adopted legislation requiring Just Cause for lease nonrenewal. BRHP encourages the committee to file a favorable report on House Bill 104.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adria Crutchfield".

Adria Crutchfield  
Executive Director  
Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership