



HOMELESS PERSONS REPRESENTATION PROJECT, INC.

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Support – HB 104 – Landlord and Tenant – Nonrenewal of Lease – Notice Requirements Hearing of the Environment & Transportation Committee, January 26, 2021

The Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc. (HPRP) is a non-profit civil legal aid organization that provides free legal representation to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness on legal issues that will lead to an end to homelessness. HPRP regularly represents tenants in failure to pay rent cases and other landlord-tenant matters in Baltimore City.

HB 104 will provide for important additional protections for renters in month-to-month leases, giving them a more reasonable period of time in which to relocate from the property upon notice that their landlord wishes to terminate the lease. Under current state landlord-tenant law, tenants in month-to-month tenancies are only afforded one month's notice, regardless of how long they have resided in the property.¹ HB 104 would extend notice requirements for month-to-month lessees, requiring landlords to provide two months' notice for tenants who have lived in the property for two years or less and three months' notice for tenants who have lived in the property for more than two years. HB 104 would maintain the status quo as to the notice required for tenants in a year-to-year lease. In our work representing tenants in Baltimore City, we have found that many leases begin with an initial lease term of one year but then convert automatically at the end of the first year to month-to-month. We have seen tenants forced to move from their home of several decades with very little notice or opportunity to find a new home. This has been particularly difficult for tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A recent client of HPRP, Rebecca, faced these challenges. Rebecca is a 58 year old disabled woman from Baltimore City who has a Section 8 voucher. She had lived in her rented single family rowhome since 1995 and raised her two children there. In January of 2020, Rebecca's home was purchased by a new owner who wanted to make extensive repairs and updates to the home that would require Rebecca to move out. Rebecca's landlord gave her notice in September 2020 that they were not renewing her lease and that she needed to move. It was extremely difficult for Rebecca to find a new place to live, in the short amount of time she had to do so. Her neighborhood was the only one she had known during her adult life and many of her family, friends, and service providers were located in the same neighborhood, but housing inventory was low. Rebecca also needed an accessible home to accommodate her disabilities, which further complicated and delayed her housing search. Rebecca also had to comply with Section 8 requirements for her move, including getting her new home approved and inspected by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City.

Under HB 104, tenants like Rebecca would be afforded three months' notice, giving them critically needed additional time to find an alternative home without the threat of eviction for holding over in the property. This extension of notice requirements is reasonable and balanced. Providing tenants with this additional notice will help them to maintain continuous housing without interruptions or periods of homelessness as they work to relocate to their new home. Now, more than ever, helping tenants maintain stable housing is essential to saving lives and preventing the spread of a global pandemic.

HPRP urges a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB 104.

Please contact Carisa A. Hatfield, Homeless Persons Representation Project, at 410-685-6589 ext. 32 or chatfield@hprplaw.org with any questions.

¹ Baltimore City requires 60 days' notice to tenants, not 30 days. Baltimore City Code of Public Local Laws, Article 4, § 9-14