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February 22, 2021

To: The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 691 – Real Property - Landlord and Tenant - Reusable Tenant Screening Reports (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General supports Senate Bill 691 sponsored by Senator Shelly Hettleman because it increases consumer choice and prevents unfairness in Maryland's rental marketplace.

Senate Bill 691 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 consumers to take steps to improve, correct, or dispute information contained within the report that could adversely impact their rental applications, thus assisting them to obtain more affordable housing.

For these reasons the Division requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee give Senate Bill 691 a favorable report.

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cc: The Honorable Shelly Hettleman
Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee