



TESTIMONY FOR SB0910 COVID-19 EVICTION AND HOUSING RELIEF ACT OF 2021

Bill Sponsor: Senator Smith

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0910 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The pandemic, and the associated economic downturn, has hit many individuals, families, and businesses very hard. Many have collapsed under the strain of having businesses forced to shut down or open at a fraction of their capacity for extended periods, loss of jobs, cuts in pay, lack of child care, and other economic fallout.

This bill will require 48 hours' notice to any tenant who is facing eviction and it prohibits eviction of any tenant who owes less than \$600 in rent. It will also allow for a grant program to be established by any local jurisdiction to establish an Eviction Prevention Program. If one is established, monies can be paid directly to landlords. If a landlord receives funds from the Eviction Prevention Program, they must forgive 20% of the past due rent owed by the tenant, waive any fees, and dismiss any eviction complaint. The Department of Community Development is also tasked with putting together information about the eviction process, rent payment plans, and available resources. This Know Your Rights information must be provided to all residential tenants.

Additionally, the bill incorporates COVID-19 relief provisions that allow for tenants to notify the landlord of lost wages due to COVID-19. The landlord would then be required to work with the tenant to set up payment plans or help the tenant apply for rental assistance before attempting any eviction proceedings.

This is exactly the relief that Marylanders need in these trying times. Allowing them a chance to get their finances back on track and not lose be evicted on top of all of their other concerns, should be a top priority for the state.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.