JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

CHARLES R. CONNER III, ESQ.
Director of Government Affairs

JOEL N. BELLER
Deputy Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **HB 31**

TITLE: Courts - Surcharges and Payment to Rental Assistance Programs

SPONSOR: Delegate Clippinger

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 17, 2021

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 31 – Courts - Surcharges and Payment to Rental Assistance Programs. This legislation increases certain surcharges on civil eviction procedures and requires the proceeds be divided equally between the Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund and rental assistance programs throughout the State.

The unprecedented job loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic has made housing an increasingly critical issue that requires immediate attention. At the start of the pandemic, County Executive Olszewski temporarily halted all evictions within Baltimore County as an emergency measure. This ensured that residents facing difficult circumstances would be protected from becoming homeless in the midst of a pandemic. When Maryland emerges from this public health crisis, housing affordability will continue to be a pressing concern for vulnerable communities, and deadlines for rent may come before employment opportunities.

Rental assistance programs have been invaluable resources during these trying times. These programs continue to give essential resources and advice to struggling families and individuals trying to seek financial stability. Surcharges on civil eviction procedures have insignificant effects on those that bring them, yet the evictions themselves have life-altering consequences for the tenants at risk. HB 31 sets up a funding mechanism using this very process which subsidizes programs to help those in need of rental assistance and legal representation.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 31. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Director of Government Affairs, at cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov.