

Arielle Juberg
Baltimore, Maryland
District 8

Testimony in Support of Bill HB0018, Landlord and Tenant – Eviction Action – Right to Counsel

To: Chair Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Arielle Juberg

My name is Arielle Juberg. I am a resident of Baltimore County in District 8. I belong to Showing Up for Racial Justice in Baltimore and Casa de Maryland's Ally Network.

I am testifying in support of HB0018, Landlord and Tenant – Eviction Action – Right to Counsel. This bill ensures renters who earn 50% or less of the median state income are guaranteed legal counsel in court hearings where they face eviction.

I am part of a small church in Baltimore County. Last year, our services were halted, only to begin again with masks. Our bulletin has been filled with news about parishioners who are sick and prayers for healthcare workers. The columns previously describing upcoming potlucks and festivals are now filled with information about the nearest food banks and food distributions. I am worried about my fellow parishioners and neighbors who rent. So many have lost their jobs, had their hours cut, or have gone through their savings. They may eventually be summoned to rental court and face eviction.

There is an extreme imbalance in power with our current standards for eviction proceedings. The Bill of Rights guarantees citizens the right to adequate representation in a criminal trial. The Framers recognized the imbalance of power and sought to place both parties on an equal playing field. While far different from a criminal trial, an eviction still has a serious and life-altering impact for a person. It potentially disrupts their physical health, employment, mental health, and children's education and stability. Eviction also disrupts communities and weakens social bonds. The importance of representation in eviction hearings was clearly demonstrated in *The Impact of an Eviction Right to Counsel in Baltimore City*, which estimated that 92% of represented tenants would avoid disruptive displacement with a right to counsel in Baltimore City.¹ To put it in other words – there is evidence that providing representation in eviction hearings would significantly decrease evictions in Maryland.

As a former renter, I know how little power you have renting an apartment or house. Even before you move in, it seems like you sign away half your rights in your lease. Providing legal counsel in eviction cases is so important to restoring some balance of power. I respectfully urge a favorable report for Bill HB0018.

¹ The Impact of an Eviction Right to Counsel in Baltimore City.
https://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/Baltimore%20RTC%20Report_FINAL_5_8_2020.pdf