



**TESTIMONY FOR HB0052
REAL PROPERTY – ALTERATIONS IN ACTIONS FOR REPOSSESSION AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF EVICTION DIVERSION PROGRAM**

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Wells

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0052 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.

Eviction is an exceptionally consequential action. Our legal process is geared to collect the monies due in any way possible, often leaving a struggling person or family on the street with little to no recourse. In many cases, the person who is delinquent is struggling to make ends meet and needs help. Eviction, and the legal process it involves, is the final act that pushes people into homelessness.

While we recognize that landlords need income just as much as tenants in order to feed their families, the process of repossessing should have as much notice to the tenant as possible and give them the best opportunity to resolve the payment problem.

This bill recognizes that it is in the best interest of both parties to step around the legal process and create a new process that will offer support to the tenant and work with them to pay any past due amounts. It establishes an Eviction Diversion Program in the District Court of any jurisdiction that processed 10,000 or more eviction claims in 2019. Instead of having an eviction trial, a conference between the parties is held, with a member of the Eviction Diversion Program. Efforts are made to enroll the tenant in a payment plan or apply for financial assistance.

If the tenant refuses, or does not work in good faith with the Eviction Diversion Program representative, then eviction proceedings can commence. We think that this will allow for a better outcome by giving the tenant an opportunity to make arrangements to pay past due amounts without having to involve eviction proceedings.

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