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Judiciary Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee
6 Bladen Street, Room 101
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 697

Good afternoon, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the House Judiciary committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams of District 22, and I will be testifying in favor of **House Bill 697**, also known as **Residential Property - Eviction Proceedings - Shielding of Court Records**. This bill is based on House Bill 20-1009 from the Colorado legislature, which was introduced and passed in early 2020 and is now law in the state. Both bills have similar intent: to protect the rights and privacy of renters.

This legislation comes at a time of national crisis, as the fallout from COVID-19 spreading throughout our communities has affected the ability of many to meet rent payments each month. Data provided by the United States Census Bureau in 2020 showed that between 30 and 40 million Americans were facing increased risk of eviction. This issue also disproportionately affects Black renters, as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reports that from 2012 to 2016, they were twice as likely to have an eviction filed against them when compared to white renters.

An eviction filing against an individual has the potential to effectively shut them out of the housing market later on, as landlords can create tenant blacklists based on public record. This legislation would function to shield these records from public view while an individual is applying to rent or purchase a property.

It is imperative, especially in today's financial climate, that we do everything in our power to make sure that those who are already in dire financial crises aren't further burdened by public records. Rent payments that are on-time every month aren't logged in public record, but

evictions are. Anyone who has ever dealt with finances knows that people's credit tells a story; many times, a story where one financial misstep can cause a snowball effect that ultimately leads to eviction. In a time where it is getting increasingly difficult to make rent payments, it is our duty to make sure that those who need help are able to get help without the looming gaze of discriminatory and predatory housing policies that will continue to haunt them long after this pandemic has passed.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to give a favorable report for HB697.

Sincerely,

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.