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Committee

Subcommittees

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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SUPPORT

HB1008 Failure to Pay Rent Proceedings - Sealing of Court Records

Dear Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am here to ask for your support on HB1008 to allow for the expungement of certain eviction records in instances where all the debts owed have been paid, when the eviction filing has been dismissed or settled, and where it is right and just to be in the interest of granting an expungement of the eviction record.

In November of 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2,410 failure to pay rent proceedings were dismissed in the courts. These eviction proceedings that are filed due to a tenant's inability to pay rent are a tactic frequently used by landlords when tenants are late with payments. Even when payments are made, debts are settled and cases dismissed, these eviction proceedings remain on the tenant's record. Having an eviction proceeding on one's record can have unintended consequences that can affect the tenant's future housing options, job opportunities, and financing abilities.

HB1008 would allow the District Court to seal the court records of eviction proceedings that were settled or where cases are dismissed. Tenants can motion to seal the record one year after the proceeding has occurred and the District Court shall seal the record 30 days after granting the tenant's motion to seal. This would greatly assist those that have been affected by a loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and have had difficulty making rent payments and had an eviction filing made against them. Without these extraordinary circumstances, tenants would have normally been able to make regular payments without interruption and they should not be punished with long-term financial impacts due to these circumstances.

For these reasons I ask for a favorable vote on HB1008 so that those affected by eviction proceedings can have an outlet to seal them on their record and not suffer long-term financial harms.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terri L. Hill'.

Terri L. Hill, M.D.