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Baltimore, Maryland

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB52

Real Property – Alterations in Actions for Repossession & Establishment of Eviction
Diversion Program.

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings
Committee

FROM: Sarah Brodsky-Simon

My name is Sarah Brodsky-Simon, I live in Baltimore, MD, District 41. **I am submitting this testimony in support of HB52, Real Property – Alterations in Actions for Repossession & Establishment of Eviction Diversion Program.**

HB52 will help prevent evictions, and minimize trauma. The combination of financial, legal, and mediation support are potentially life-saving actions for Maryland families.

Eviction, and even the threat of eviction can be devastating. One overdue rent payment can result in an eviction filing- and the consequences can compound quickly- pushing tenants into homelessness, disrupting employment, education, and even essential health care. According to the CDC a traumatic event such as an eviction can have a lasting impact on the brain and leave an individual vulnerable to disease, addiction, and suicide. For many years I worked with individuals with serious mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorders, and other disabilities, and I saw many of these tragic impacts first hand. Consequently it has long been my understanding that keeping people in their homes can save lives. **Now with a deadly pandemic raging - its irrefutable- the loss of home is a public health risk and can be a death sentence.** In Judaism, one of the most essential teachings is the obligation to save a human life when that life is endangered. The concept is known as *Pikuach Nefesh*. With very few exceptions, an individual must do all within his or her power to save a life. I'm urging the committee today to take the actions within your power.

Here in Maryland, the families most impacted by eviction are Black and brown households- the very same population that have been most affected by the public health impacts of COVID-19. **Reducing the numbers of evictions would help to reduce significant racial inequities and strengthen these affected communities.**

Passage of SB454/HB52 can help to resolve housing inequities, reduce evictions for failure to pay rent, minimize trauma, increase access to stable and safe housing for all Marylanders, **and save lives.**

I respectfully urge a strong and favorable report from the Committee on SB454/HB52.