

February 5, 2022

The Honorable Mary A. Lehman
317 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB0385 - Maryland Economic Development Corporation – Student Housing Requirements
– Leases and Health or Safety Emergencies

Dear Delegate Lehman:

My name is Clarence Hatcher Jr, and I am an alumnus of the University of Maryland College Park as well as parent of a current University of Maryland College Park (UMD) undergraduate. I would like to provide testimony on the ordeal experience by daughter and myself (lease guarantor) because of callous and dishonest management of the student housing at The Courtyards in College Park.

During the COVID-19 pandemic UMD shuttered all student housing in the spring of 2020, at which time my daughter, Sydney Hatcher was a sophomore tenant of on campus housing. She returned home and completed the spring semester from home online. With COVID-19 pandemic still raging, there was a clear uncertainty if the UMD campus was going to reopen in the fall of 2020. Optimism was high, therefore we planned to find housing for the fall 220 semester. As a raising junior on campus housing was limited therefore, we were directed to The Courtyards as an option by UMD resident life. This off campus housing was presented as a UMD off campus housing, but still part of UMD resident life requiring leasors to be UMD students. Still uncertain if UMD would reopen for on campus classes, we were reassured The Courtyards would do as they did in the spring of 2020, release students from their leases if UMD moved back to online classes. Furthermore, these off campus apartments would follow the same guidance and policy of on campus housing. I specifically asked if the campus was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in classes moving online and dorm closures, would The Courtyard follow this directive. I was verbally provided assurances of our ability to cancel the lease if this were to occur. Well, it did occur and on campus housing leases were cancelled providing students with full refunds along with no penalties. Students holding leases at The Courtyards were not given this option, but instead required to forfeit security deposits, threat of adverse credit and collection actions and had to endure the expense of hiring lawyers to handle the situation. My daughter feared the threat of course unenrollment, and loss of scholarships due to being unenrolled. This inequitable treatment of all the student engaged in off-campus housing offered by University of Maryland Resident Life created undue mental and financial stress and provided anxiety to myself and my daughter. The University of Maryland College Park is supposed to be the flagship university in The University of Maryland system. It is supposed to take care of its students and

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create a learning environment which will results in success of its students. Instead, the University hide behind its private/public partnership with calculated deflection of responsibility.

The University of Maryland and COCM/MEDCO showed a callous regard to its student tenants and put profits above the student's welfare. I am certain this has had an effect on my daughter academic success and has certainly diminished a considerable amount of pride I once held for The University of Maryland College Park.

If you need to have further discussion about this testimony or related issues, I can be reached at the contact information provide below.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clarence Hatcher Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Clarence Hatcher Jr
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