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**TESTIMONY ON HBI 34 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**  
**Failure to Pay Rent Proceedings - Prohibition on Rent Increases and Sealing of Court Records**

**TO:** Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Anna T Levy on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

**My name is Anna T Levy. I am a resident of District 16. On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I am submitting this testimony to support with amendments HBI 34, Failure to Pay Rent Proceedings - Prohibition on Rent Increases and Sealing of Court Records.** Jews United for Justice organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of local social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

Access to safe and stable housing has far reaching economic, health, and social benefits to individuals, families, and communities, and is a key to reducing racial inequities. Renters routinely have little agency when faced with threats to maintaining stable housing. One overdue rent payment can result in an eviction filing. As a Jewish person, I am taught that all people should have *dei machsoro*, resources sufficient for each person's needs. (Deut. 15:7-8) Consequently, society has an obligation to make sure that people are able to find affordable housing and are not penalized for failure to pay rent proceedings which were dismissed, otherwise resolved without eviction, or for inaccurate reportings.

Evictions are socially and financially destabilizing to individuals, families and our communities. A history of eviction filings, even when resolved without eviction, impacts a renter's ability to find new housing. Landlords are often unwilling to rent to people with a history of evictions or will raise a tenant's rent so that it becomes unaffordable.

The passage of HBI 34 can help to resolve housing inequities, increase access to stable and safe housing and help Marylanders achieve financial stability after difficult times. By sealing court records of eviction filings for failure to pay rent that do not result in eviction, tenants are given the opportunity to move forward with their lives.

JUFJ supports HBI 34 with two critical amendments: 1) to remove language excluding subsidized tenants from the essential protections that HB 134 provides; and 2) to include within the bill a definition of sealing. With these two amendments, HBI 34 would take critical steps to protect renters' privacy, allow easier access to safe and stable housing, and promote racial justice.

**On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I respectfully urge a favorable report from the Committee on HBI 34 with amendments.**