

March 29, 2022



THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

Molly Amster
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TESTIMONY ON SB 384 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Landlord and Tenant - Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental Assistance Determination

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

FROM: Molly Amster, on behalf of Jews United for Justice

My name is Molly Amster. I live in District 43, and I am the Maryland Policy Director & Baltimore Director of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 384, Landlord and Tenant - Stay of Eviction Proceeding for Rental Assistance Determination, on behalf of JUFJ. JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of state and local social, racial, and economic justice campaigns, inspired by our Jewish values.

Jewish texts are full of conversation, laws and traditions about the obligations of landlords and tenants, about building homes safely and about making sure people can remain housed. For example, the Talmud teaches that a landlord cannot evict a tenant during the rainy season - surely a pandemic would be a similarly important time to protect against homelessness. The Gemara in Bava Kamma teaches that, in response to a plague, we have an obligation to stay in our homes as much as possible. It is unjust and cruel, and contrary to Jewish values, to rush toward eviction where there is a less drastic alternative which could avoid eviction altogether. And there is - **Maryland has \$400 million in rental assistance to keep families housed. Surely it's good policymaking to ensure that money has the time needed to have the intended impact.**

SB 384, like the cross-file HB 674, provides that the court should hit the pause button on rent-based evictions when a good-faith rental assistance application is pending. Despite ample rental assistance funds, Maryland still has nearly 700 evictions/month across the state. The Senate adopted substantial amendments in response to the landlord and property owner groups (MMHA and AOBA) and received a unanimous favorable vote in the Judicial Proceedings Committee. **We urge the Committee to vote favorable on SB 384 as amended by the Senate without weakening amendments.**