

TERRI L. HILL, M.D.

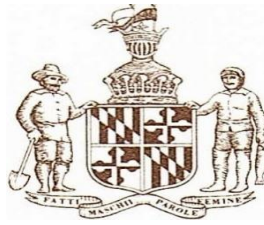
Legislative District 12

Baltimore and Howard Counties

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and Health Facilities
Public Health and Minority Health Disparities



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 18, 2022

SUPPORT

HB134 - Failure to Pay Rent Proceedings - Sealing of Court Records

Dear Chairmen Barve and Clippinger, Vice-chairs Stein and Moon, and Members of the Joint Committee,

I am here to ask for your support for HB134 which allows for the sealing of certain eviction filing records in instances where a judgement for eviction was never made because, for instance, the debt was resolved before the hearing or the eviction filing was otherwise settled or dismissed or settled. This would help ensure that the filing of a failure-to-pay action does not carry the same long-term, potentially detrimental effects of an actual finding of a failure-to-pay or eviction itself. That is why your members and the House passed this legislation last year, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee affirmed their support, had there been time for it to come to a vote.

This is a long-standing issue that, like many other injustices, was magnified during the pandemic. While many failure-to-pay filings for eviction are legitimate, others are not. Even when payments are made, debts 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. In November of 2020, 2,410 failure to pay rent proceedings were dismissed in court. In some cases filings are used to antagonize tenants for late payments and not for non-payment.

HB134 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.

I am asking that a committee amendment denying Section 8 voucher recipient from being eligible for sealing be removed, as the compliance with federal rules is adequately addressed through other mechanisms currently in place and the time during which a filing is available for the Public Housing Authority overseeing the program to obtain the information is more than adequate. There is also a co-sponsor amendment I would ask that you adopt.

I ask for a favorable vote on HB134 with sponsor's amendments.

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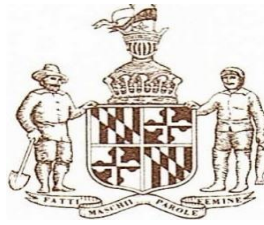
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Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terri Hill", is written over a light blue horizontal line.