



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 693

HB 693 - Courts – Surcharges and Payment to Special Funds

House Judiciary Committee, February 16, 2022

Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Advocates for Children and Youth

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Catholic Charities

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Health Care for the Homeless

Homeless Persons
Representation Project

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Catholic Conference

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

Public Justice Center

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports HB 693 only if the bill is amended to stop the court and the landlord from passing onto tenants the increased filing fee for failure-to-pay-rent (summary ejection) actions. Unless the bill is amended to prohibit passing through the fee to tenants, tenants will be required to pay this \$60 increase to “pay and stay” and avoid eviction & homelessness. Some will not be able to do so. If HB 693 does not include this amendment, we must oppose the bill.

Eviction often leads to homelessness. Each year in Maryland, more than 30,000 people experience homelessness. Leading researchers with the Aspen Institute and others have [documented the ways in which eviction cause homelessness and other forms of immense human suffering](#):

- [Following eviction](#), a person’s likelihood of experiencing homelessness increases, mental and physical health are diminished, and the probability of obtaining employment declines.
- Eviction is linked to [numerous poor health outcomes](#), including depression, suicide, and anxiety, among others.
- Eviction is also [linked with respiratory disease](#), which could increase the risk of complications if COVID-19 is contracted, as well as mortality risk during COVID-19.
- Eviction makes it more expensive and more difficult for tenants who have been evicted to [rent safe and decent housing](#), apply for credit, borrow money, or purchase a home.
- Instability, like eviction, is [particularly damaging to children](#), who suffer in ways that impact their educational development and well-being for years.

This does not include the [enormous public costs of eviction and homelessness](#) from Medicaid-insured homeless persons forced to use the emergency room as their primary care physician or the increased number of children forced to enter foster care due to eviction.

Making it more difficult for extremely low-income families to avoid eviction by requiring them to pay an additional \$60 to pay and stay is inequitable. Particularly for subsidized tenants who may only pay \$50 per month in rent, requiring them to pay an additional \$60 in costs when they’ve fallen behind undermines many of the progressive policies that the General Assembly has enacted to reduce homelessness. We strongly favor amending the bill to prohibit passing the fee onto tenants or striking the increased summary ejection fee from the bill altogether.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.