

OFFICERS

RABBI ANDREW BUSCH

President

ELIZABETH GREEN

1st Vice President

THE HON. CHAYA FRIEDMAN

BENJAMIN ROSENBERG

RABBI STEVEN SCHWARTZ

MELANIE SHAPIRO

ROBIN WEIMAN

YEHUDA NEUBERGER

Past President

HOWARD LIBIT

Executive Director

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Adat Chaim Congregation

American Jewish Committee

Americans for Peace Now

Baltimore Chapter

American Israel Public Affairs Committee

American Red Magen David for Israel

American Zionist Movement

Amit Women

Association of Reform Zionists of America

Baltimore Board of Rabbis

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation

Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance

Baltimore Men's ORT

Baltimore Zionist District

Beth Am Congregation

Beth El Congregation

Beth Israel Congregation

Beth Shalom Congregation of

Howard County

Beth Tfiloh Congregation

B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region

B'nai Israel Congregation

B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation

Bolton Street Synagogue

Chevra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.

Chevrei Tzedek Congregation

Chizuk Amuno Congregation

Congregation Beit Tikvah

Congregation Beth Shalom of

Carroll County

Congregation Tiferes Yisroel

Federation of Jewish Women's

Organizations of Maryland

Hadassah

Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation

J Street

Jewish Federation of Howard County

Jewish Labor Committee

Jewish War Veterans

Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary

Jewish Women International

Jews For Judaism

Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah

Hebrew Congregation

National Council of Jewish Women

Ner Tamid Congregation

Rabbinical Council of America

Religious Zionists of America

Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation

Shomrei Emunah Congregation

Simon E. Sobeloff Jewish Law Society

Suburban Orthodox Congregation

Temple Beth Shalom

Temple Isaiah

Zionist Organization of America

Baltimore District

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 279 – Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund – Alteration

Judicial Proceeding Committee

February 9, 2022

SUPPORT

Background: Senate Bill 279 (SB279) This bill would establish a funding mechanism for the right to legal counsel for low-income tenants in rent court who are facing eviction. Additionally, it funds several resources for tenants to help them know their rights throughout the eviction process. Funding would be derived from fees paid by violators of the Maryland Consumer Protection Act for an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practices relating to residential rental properties.

Written Comments: The pandemic has dramatically exacerbated an already budding affordable housing crisis in Maryland. The eventual amount of evictions it leads to could be unprecedented. SB 279 would help mitigate the effects of this crisis by funding the *already existing* tenant access to counsel program. It will ensure that all tenants have access to what should be considered a basic resource, during an eviction.

Just 1% of tenants appear in rent court with representation, compared to 98% of landlords who do have representation. This undoubtedly leaves tenants lost in the proceedings of rent court and makes it significantly more likely they will conclude with a negative disposition. Not only would this bill keep more tenants in their homes, it would save the state and localities millions of dollars each year in services for would-be homeless families, while decreasing the burden on law enforcement and the courts.

As the legislative arm of The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, we represent Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc. (CHAI). CHAI works to provide assistance to all residents of Northwest Baltimore. This includes helping them find a safe place to live, and to stay in their home even during difficult circumstances. This bill would provide CHAI, and all housing assistance agencies in Maryland with more of the tools they need to continue helping clients in need. With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of SB 279.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

5750 Park Heights Avenue, Suite 329 • Baltimore, Maryland 21215

410-542-4850 • fax 410-542-4834 • baltjc.org

Member of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated