



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 703

Real Property – Actions to Repossess – Judgment for Tenants and Proof of Rental Licensure

House Judiciary Committee

February 16, 2022

Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

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Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports HB 703, which would require landlords to show a valid rental license to a judge in the event of a residential eviction case.

While landlords are required to pass a property inspection and obtain a rental license in order to lawfully operate rental properties in most jurisdictions, a 2015 study found that over 70 percent of landlords in one jurisdiction had either omitted licensing information or provided invalid.

Additionally, in a previous 2021 court case, *Velicky v. Copy Cat Building*, it was ruled that unlicensed landlords may use a different court procedure called "Tenant Holding Over" to evict their tenants, even though previous court rulings have required landlords to state their rental license number on the form for "Failure to Pay Rent" eviction cases.

Special eviction proceedings such as these allow illegally operating landlords to use the court system to make a profit while evading compliance with laws specifically designed to eliminate unsafe housing. In these cases, unlicensed landlords are able to use eviction cases to force tenants to pay rent despite substandard conditions in the building, often impacting the most vulnerable and low-income Marylanders.

HB 703 aims to protect renters from unsafe housing situations, even the playing field for lawfully acting landlords, and clean up our court systems by making sure that all landlords comply with local rental licensing laws before they come to court for eviction.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 703.

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.