

HB0703, Real Property – Actions to Repossess – Judgment for Tenants and Proof of Rental Licensure
Testimony in **Support**

To: Chair Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Arielle Juberg

My name is Arielle Juberg. I am a resident of Baltimore County in District 8. I belong to Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) in Baltimore. SURJ is working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland and Renters United. I am testifying in **support** of HB0703, Real Property – Actions to Repossess – Judgment for Tenants and Proof of Rental Licensure.

HB0703 is important to me because everyone deserves a safe, hazard-free home. Our current system incentivizes non-compliance with local laws and hampers efforts to ensure rental housing is safe. As a renter, I've encountered elevator doors with no sensors, poorly insulated buildings, and outdated fire extinguishing systems. I didn't know about these issues before moving in, and I had little ability to fix them.

Outside Maryland, the fire that killed 17 people in New York in January 2022 was enabled by below-code operations that were known and allowed to continue. Everything from poorly-functioning heating which required tenants to use their own supplemental heat, to faulty doors that didn't close themselves, allowed the fire to start and smoke to spread throughout the building. This occurred in a building where landlords had some degree of oversight in place. A system that enables landlords to operate business as usual with no oversight is inevitably headed towards a dangerous situation.

While rental licenses are necessary to lawfully operate rental properties in most Maryland counties and cities, unlicensed landlords operating unlawfully are still entitled to specialized eviction proceedings without proof of a valid license. An egregious example of the nonsensical system this creates is evidenced in *Velicky v. Copy Cat Building*, where the court held that unlicensed landlords can utilize Tenant Holding Over eviction actions even when turned away for failure to Pay Rent Actions.

We have systems to ensure safe rental housing. Don't allow landlords to unlawfully operate hazardous rental properties while benefiting from eviction processes. I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0703**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

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