

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am a resident of District 8. I am testifying in support of the Tenant Safety Act (HB0691). This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are working in collaboration with CASA & Renters United Maryland.



As someone who formerly rented, I have looked for affordable and safe housing in Baltimore. I've lived in apartments with insufficient insulation, antiquated appliances, and pest problems. Sometimes, these problems can be annoyances; other times, they can be serious risks to health and safety. No one should have to live in unsafe conditions, and tenants should have the ability to work together to address their problems.

At present in Maryland, a group of tenants experiencing the same substandard living conditions from the same landlord each have to file an action individually, and they frequently do not have the benefit of representation, as it can be challenging to afford counsel. Even when tenants are able to file, as has been the case in Baltimore for decades, only 6% of cases in rent court resulted in reduced rent, according to a Baltimore Sun review of over 5,500 cases from 2010 to 2016¹ – a troublingly low rate.

Maryland was ranked 32nd among the 50 states for severe housing problems in a recent analysis of US Housing & Urban Development data from 2015-2019². Our state should be leading the nation at providing safe and affordable housing. Instead, we have too many properties with significant issues like severe cost burden or insufficient kitchen and plumbing facilities.

This legislation addresses two growing concerns among Marylanders: first, their need for safer housing conditions, and second, the need to lower the barrier of entry to courts to address poor housing conditions. Remarkably, this bill addresses both concerns *while increasing court efficiency*. Since conditions issues cases can be compiled across a particular property owned by a particular landlord into a single proceeding, the courts are saved the administrative burden of duplicative cases.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0691**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Arielle Juberg
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¹ <https://data.baltimoresun.com/news/dismissed/>

² https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/severe_housing_problems/state/MD